

A turning point for Teamster democracy
August 19 - September 1, 1996

IN THESE TIMES

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Joanna Cagan and Neil deMause report

E D I T O R I A L

ENDING THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AS WE KNOW IT

When President Clinton announced that he would sign the Republican welfare reform bill, he said he was doing so to redeem his 1992 pledge to end welfare as we know it. His goal, he said, was to transform a broken system that traps too many people in a cycle of dependence into one that emphasizes work and independence. By giving people on welfare a chance to draw a paycheck, not a welfare check, they would have a better chance to succeed at home as well as at work.

These were laudable goals, but they have little or nothing to do with the bill passed by Congress. Clinton says the bill was "a real step forward for our country, our values and for the people who are on welfare." In reality, it is a giant step backward to the days when the poor were left to fend for themselves. The values the new legislation represents are the very worst of a society obsessed with corporate profit as the ultimate measure of social health.

Welfare as we know it should surely be ended. But it should be ended in a way that provides every person capa-

With the left safely in his back pocket, Clinton feels free to act like a Republican. But his signing of the welfare reform bill may lead to mass abstentions in November.

ble of working with an equal right to employment, and everyone who is employed with a living wage. In the long run, that would also require equal educational opportunity for all at all levels of instruction, universal health care and quality child care for working mothers. Such a program should be federally mandated and funded, but administered by the states or by elected community councils. And it should be available to all citizens and legal residents up to a comfortable income level, and paid for by graduated income taxes on those above that level.

Of course, in the present political context, many of these goals are unattainable. Nevertheless, the Democratic Party should clearly articulate these goals and fight for them. A party that claims to represent the interests of working people should certainly not acquiesce in the destruction of the few protections that poor people have had until now.

The bill Clinton signed requires those now on welfare to work, but it provides none of the supports that make such a transition possible. It does not mandate community service jobs or other work provided by the state as employer of last resort. It provides child care to fewer

people, does not provide wage supplements or require a minimum wage high enough to escape poverty, and does not guarantee income tax credits to those earning below-poverty wages. The bill further provides inadequate training and educational supports to prepare those now on welfare to be competitive in today's labor market. The only jobs most will be qualified for are the most degrading and poorly paid.

In short, by signing the bill, Clinton not only ended welfare as we know it, but also the Democratic Party as we have known it—or as many of its constituents have liked to think of it. Since the 1930s, the Democrats have been a loose coalition of forces. And while the party has always been controlled by big business, its popular base has largely been made up of organized labor, African-Americans, feminists, environmentalists and civil libertarians. Their needs and desires have always been considered, if not honored, especially in election seasons.

As president, however, Clinton has ignored working people's interests time and again. He did not increase the minimum wage when he had a Democratic majority in Congress. He pushed fecklessly for striker-replacement legislation but worked like a demon to get NAFTA passed. And now he has signed a welfare bill opposed by the entire spectrum of popular forces that make up the party's left wing—and its electoral core. His policy advisers in the Cabinet opposed the bill, but Clinton accepted the argument of his campaign advisers that those to his left have nowhere else to go in November.

This may be a correct assessment, yet Clinton cannot constantly demean his supporters without running the risk of abandonment. There is a real danger that he will lose more votes from core constituents staying home on election day—or voting for Ross Perot or Ralph Nader—than he will gain from the "middle-class moderates" he courted by signing this bill.

In any case, for all the groups that constitute the Democratic left, the lesson should be clear: Without leadership and organization of its own, without a program that clearly states priorities based on social need and control of capital, and without a forceful challenge to the "new Democrats," they will continue to suffer one defeat after another.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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InTHESETIMES

CONTENTS

Volume 20, Number 20



A blast from the past

The old guard was out in force at this July's Teamsters convention.

DAVID MOBERG

18

The great stadium swindle

Cash-starved civic leaders kowtow to corporate magnates.

JOANNA CAGAN AND NEIL DEMAUSE

14



An opposition coalesces

Mexico's political system is cracking under pressure from above and below.

FRED ROSEN

22

FEATURES

- The First Stone: Power plays** • Joel Bleifuss12
Rebuilding churches and race relations • Martha Honey25

REVIEWS

- In Print: *The Flight*** • Karen Robert28
The Atlas • Sandy Zipp30
The Politics of Rage • David Chappell32
Search and Destroy • J.W. Mason34

DEPARTMENTS

- Letters**4
Sylvia • Nicole Hollander4
In Short6
Appall-O-Meter • David Futrelle7
Media Watch • Thomas Goetz9
Tomorrow's news • Steve Brodner9
Huge Mouth • Peter Hannan11
Classifieds37



LETTERS

Guatemala's progress

Regarding Lisa Haugaard's article on the CIA's involvement in Guatemala ("Admissions and omissions," July 22): The Clinton panel's disclosure of CIA abuses, although incomplete, could represent an important step in bringing the current peace process to a successful conclusion. Washington has maintained a Mephistophelian relationship with the Guatemalan armed forces for decades—beginning with the 1954 coup and carried on through subsequent military training programs, intelligence contacts, low-intensity warfare exercises and economic assistance efforts. As a result, the U.S. shares major responsibility for the militaristic hegemony that now prevails in Guatemala. Despite this dismal heritage, the peace talks offer hope. The dialogue between Guatemalan authori-

ties and the insurgents, which began in 1986, has produced some significant accomplishments. For example, the U.N.'s presence since 1994 has catalyzed a widening tolerance of political dissension and some public criticism of democratic lapses. In another positive sign, the leftist New Guatemala Democratic Front has won some seats in the Congress, giving the insurgents a voice. In March, President Alvaro Arzú ordered the Guatemalan army to halt all counterinsurgency operations in response to the URNG's cease-fire declaration. One of the more remarkable milestones in the peace process was the government's announcement of the demobilization of the Civil Defense Patrols, a particularly brutal auxiliary of the military that dispensed "justice" by terrorizing Indian communities.

The military and its ideological allies among the landed gentry remain the greatest impediments to long-lasting peace and democracy. Democratic insti-

tutions will only flourish if the military's autonomy is curtailed and their close ties with the country's large landowners are severed. The United States could begin to make amends for the decades of despair it has visited upon Guatemala by serving as a catalyst in the process of demilitarization. But most of all, both nations need to confront the military's ongoing impunity. Without this, there is little hope of preventing a repeat of the past and little hope of achieving a lasting peace.

Sona U. Kumar

Research Associate

Council on Hemispheric Affairs

Washington, D.C.

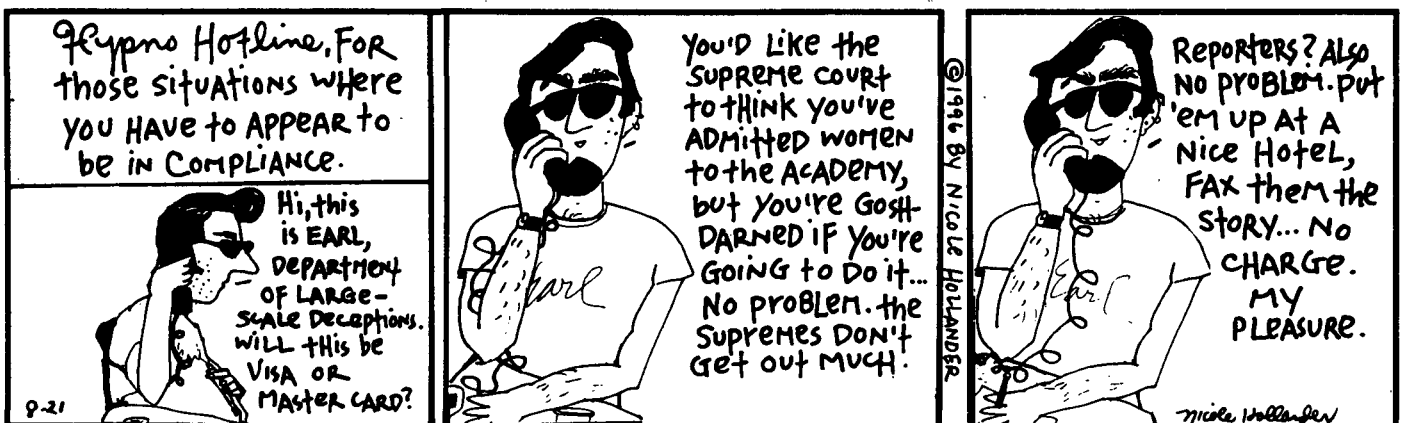
Campaign reform

The campaign finance provisions of the Maine Clean Elections Act described by Joel Bleifuss in "Reforming the beast" (June 24) are long overdue. But wouldn't it be better to give candidates free airtime on PBS (which we presently pay for, only to have our own money used to flood us with a steady stream of blatant, unrelenting corporate propaganda) than to have them spend still more taxpayers' money on corporate media that are free to accept or reject ads at their own pleasure?

And wouldn't a shortened campaign season be a step in the wrong direction? It seems to me that it would increase the already huge advantage that well-heeled incumbents have over grass-roots progressive challengers, who must overcome media hostility,

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



burdensome petitioning requirements, and a lack of name recognition and advertising money by relying on time-consuming door-to-door campaigning and speaking to small groups.

Alan J. Port
Athens, Ill.

Imposing social values on capital

Here's something *ITT* readers should know about: the Job Destruction Penalty Act [New Jersey Assembly No. 1974 (1996)], sponsored by the New Jersey State Industrial Union Council, AFL-CIO.

This bill would require companies with more than 100 employees that shut down to give laid-off workers two months of pay for each year they were employed. In addition, corporations engaging in large-scale layoffs would have to contribute \$4,000 per employee to the locality affected by the closure. If the company finds equivalent employment for the workers within the vicinity, the payments would be waived.

Although the bill is by no means a "cure-all" for the omnipresent problem of the relocation of our manufacturing economy, it would force employers to give a real "second thought" before closing down major facilities in the Garden State.

Needless to say, the business community has been able to play off state against state, region against region, locality against locality, and even country against country in seeking the most profitable locales. The result has been intense competition among governments in North America, South America, Asia and elsewhere to establish a "favorable business climate" at the expense of the security, health and well-being of working and middle-income people. Governments find themselves "economic hostages" to capital's threats to move elsewhere.

William J. Volonte
New Brunswick, N.J.

Selling out the public

The Save Pittsburgh Public TV (SPPTV) Coalition would like to thank *In These Times* for featuring Joel Bleifuss' article "Public television on the block" (July 8).

We had our first campaign victory on July 24: The Federal Communications Commission denied QED Pittsburgh's petition to take away the non-commercial status of WQEX's license and then hand the station over to a local religious right broadcaster, Cornerstone TeleVision (CTV). From the sale of the private station that this Christian Coalition outlet is currently using, CTV stands to gain 50 percent of the first \$45 million from the sale proceeds and 60 percent of the proceeds above that amount. Sure, QED's \$14 million debt can be retired, but there's plenty of room for probable raises, bonuses, golden parachutes and kickbacks for the QED executives who recklessly drove our public trust into such a terrible indebted position. And why should the sectarian CTV feed from the public trough? I guess "the love of money is the root of all evil" doesn't apply to these multimillionaire Pat Robertson wannabes.

Since public and commercial radio and TV marginalize or altogether ignore left voices, the SPPTV Coalition is grateful for publications like *ITT* that provide timely, "active" information that motivates progressive citizenship.

B.J. Campbell
Pittsburgh

If you would like to participate in our campaign, call (412) 363-4410.

The Qana massacre

In the June 24 issue of *In These Times*, Israeli historian Benny Morris refers to Israel's shelling of the Palestinian refugees at Qana in southern Lebanon as a "misdirected salvo." Morris thus endorses the official

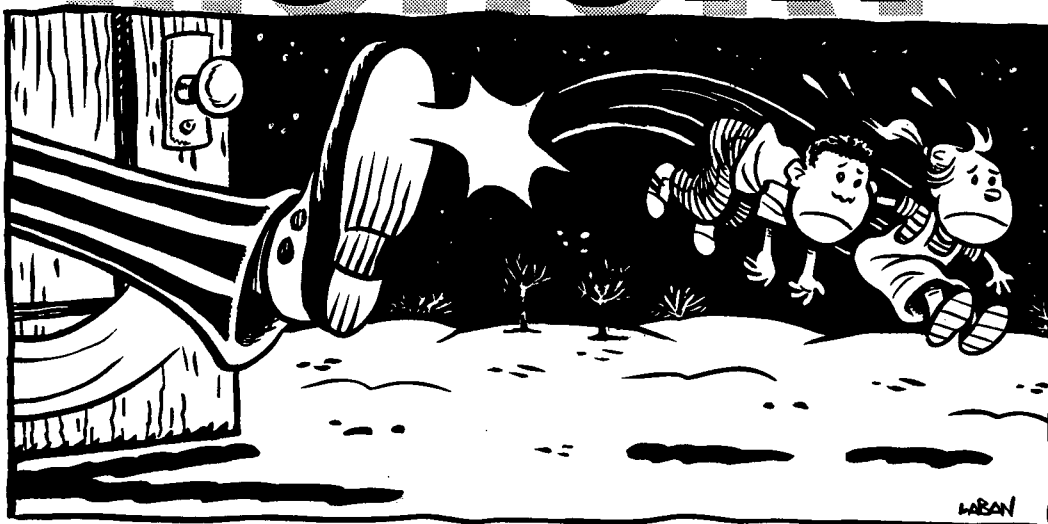
Israeli position that the shelling was an accident. As Robert Fisk reported in the London *Independent*, it was a deliberate massacre of more than 100 refugees. Fisk declared: "Not since Sabra and Chatila [in Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon] had I seen the innocent slaughtered like this." The U.N. investigated the Qana massacre, and in an official report concluded that the massacre was not an accident.

The U.S. and Israel lobbied hard to try to alter the conclusions of the report, or to suppress the publication of the report altogether. When U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali bucked the pressure and published the report anyway, the U.S. retaliated by blocking Boutros-Ghali from a second term as secretary-general. This is the first time in the entire history of the U.N. that a secretary-general has been denied a second term. The U.N. had representatives at Qana, because the Qana massacre occurred at a U.N. refugee camp. Benny Morris, who wasn't at Qana, is free to disagree with the U.N. report, but at least he should mention its existence and provide evidence that refutes its conclusions.

Normally, Morris is not a supporter of Israeli massacres. (In 1995, he was one of a handful of courageous Israeli historians who revealed that the Israeli military had conducted massacres of Arab prisoners after every war, thus challenging the Israeli national myth of "the purity of arms.") But even Morris could not face the truth about Qana: Shimon Peres was engaged in an electoral campaign, trying to prove that he was just as tough as Netanyahu. Instead of kissing babies, Peres shelled Palestinian refugees. Morris appears to believe that the Labor Party is made up of men of good will, earnestly desiring to solve the problems of peace. Honest coverage of the Qana massacre would have undermined his case.

John Farley
Henderson, Nev.

InSHORT



WAR AGAINST THE POOR

When Bill Clinton ran for president in 1992 as a “new Democrat,” he promised to “end welfare as we know it.” The program he proposed would have poured an additional \$10 billion into job training, child care and transportation assistance for parents trying to work and get off welfare. Although soon jettisoned as too expensive, the proposal began the process of legitimizing welfare reform as no Republican president could have done.

Earlier this month, the nation reaped the fruits of Clinton’s campaign rhetoric. As congressional Republicans compared welfare to child abuse and most Democrats remained mute, the president signed bipartisan legislation that cuts \$54 billion from welfare over six years and abolishes Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Introduced by Republicans in an attempt to boost Bob Dole’s flagging campaign before the Republican con-

vention—and supported by more than half the Democrats in Congress—the new law ends all federal guarantees of support to poor children and their families. It turns welfare (with diminished federal funding) over to the states in the form of block grants, which will be frozen at 1997 levels until 2001. In addition, states will face 5 percent deductions from their block grants for each year they fail to satisfy work-participation requirements that, according to the Congressional Budget Office, most cannot meet.

The new law will “assist” recipients—or “participants,” as they’re now called—to get off welfare by imposing a five-year lifetime limit on cash benefits. Within two months of receiving benefits, they must perform community service; within two years, they must work. There is no funding for job training or works programs, and no guarantee of child care, despite increased funding for that purpose. States

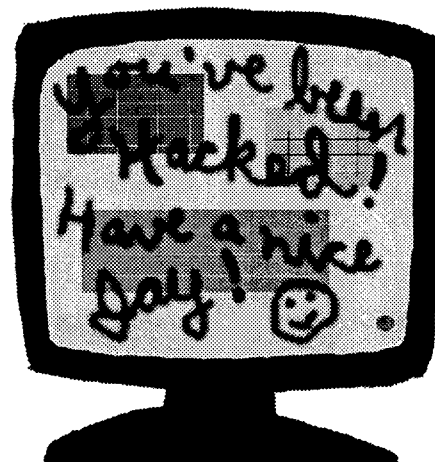
are free to set their own eligibility and benefit standards, as well as to provide additional support—if they can find the funds. Or they can set even shorter time limits. Lawmakers defeated amendments that would have provided vouchers for children of parents who have exhausted their five-year time limit without finding work.

More than half the cuts come from programs that help support the

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Virtual virtue

“A SMALL MINORITY OF ‘CYBER-VANDALS’ HAS GIVEN THE HACKING COMMUNITY a bad name,” says a recent press release from Agents of a Hostile Power. This group of Irish, Canadian, American and British computer hackers, who for obvious legal reasons remain anonymous, claims that after breaking into a computer system, they then alert the violated party. “We don’t delete files. We don’t crash systems. We don’t read users’ personal files or e-mail. We hack for the intellectual challenge of it,” say the Agents. The group gets their name from Scotland Yard Detective Inspector John Austen’s remark that “gullible young hackers could be taken advantage of by agents of a hostile power.” —Joel Bleifuss



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APPALL-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES


David Futrella

Doling kudos 4.6

residential candidate and freelance media critic Bob Dole offered up a capsule review of the film *Independence Day* recently, while in the midst of a fact-finding mission to Sodom-by-the-Valley (aka Los Angeles). Dole gave the film a hearty thumbs up, telling reporters it was an uplifting film that everyone should see—even though millions of Americans die in the course of the film and the White House is itself destroyed.

"I liked it. We won, the end, leadership, America, good over evil," Dole explained in his characteristically laconic reviewing style. "It's a good movie. Bring your family, to be proud of when you leave. It's about diversity in America and leadership." Kenneth L. Khachigian, Dole's senior California adviser, told the *Los Angeles Times* it didn't much matter that so many were killed in the film because "they're all liberals" anyway.

Holy moly! 8.8

After losing an impromptu Bible-quoting contest early one July morning, an angry Alabama man took it upon himself to exact less-than-divine retribution. According to an Associated Press



report, Gabel Taylor, a preacher's brother, and the suspect were comparing their Bible knowledge, each quoting different versions of the same passages. To settle the dispute, the suspect retrieved his Bible and realized he was wrong. In a rage, he up and shot the contest victor.

Elsewhere on the Bible-interpretation front: Wisconsin's governor and would-be ender-of-welfare-as-we-know-it attempted to enlist Jesus on his

side in the midst of an ongoing debate with Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert Weakland. "I thought [Jesus] was a free enterpriser," the *Madison Capital Times* quoted Gov. Tommy Thompson as saying. "He was a carpenter's son and I thought he was doing well. He was able to turn water into wine; now that to me is the classic definition of a guy in the entrepreneurial spirit."

Copy cat 4.2

In the old days, they had to plagiarize by hand. Now, fortunately, it's been automated for us. A recent item in the *San Francisco Chronicle's* "corrections" column proclaimed that "Because of an editing error, the Book Review's June 30 review of *Jesse: The Life and Pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson* by Marshall Frady carried some paragraphs from the review of the same book that appeared in the *Washington Post*. The problem occurred when a wire-service version of the *Post* review was placed in the wrong computer file and inadvertently spliced into the *Chronicle* review."

Thanks to John Kyper and Rima Apple for their altogether non-appalling assistance.

legislation, Clinton stressed his disagreement with the denial of aid to legal immigrants, the depth of the food stamp cuts and the failure to provide vouchers. He promised to "correct" the legislation in the next Congress. But Clinton hardly distinguished himself from Republican backers when he called the legislation the country's "best hope" for reforming a "broken system." In fact, there is no reason to believe the new law will do anything but lower wages and income while increasing the number of homeless families and children with serious health problems. The Urban Institute has already calculated that it will throw an additional 2.6 million people into poverty. Over 1 million of the newly poor will be children, raising the U.S. child-poverty rate, already the highest among Western industrial nations, by 12 percent.

If Clinton and the congressional Democrats have calculated that "welfare reform" would garner more votes than it would cost—and that labor and liberal allies would not desert them as a result—they are probably right. But as the AFL-CIO works all-out to reelect Clinton and help Democrats attempt to retake the House and Senate, it is worth remembering, as Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) observed, that the party of Social Security and civil rights has just commenced to repeal and undermine both.

—Katherine Sciacchitano

BURUNDI ON THE BRINK

A rmy officers and politicians of Burundi's long-dominant but minority Tutsi ethnic group overthrew the country's Hutu president in late July. The coup followed the brutal slaying of close to 300 Tutsis earlier that month by Hutu rebels north of the capital city of Bujumbura. With attacks against them increasing in number and violence in the past six months, Burundi's Tutsis (who comprise 15 percent of the country's 6 mil-

already-working poor. Federal food stamp programs will be cut by 20 percent, lowering benefits and tightening eligibility standards, particularly for childless workers. Additional restrictions to Supplemental Security Income, which provides support for the elderly and disabled, are expected to cast another 315,000 children off the rolls. Most legal immigrants will be prohibit-

ed from receiving means-tested assistance, including Medicaid. This restriction prompted Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) to observe that if such a law had always been in effect, 46 members of the U.S. Olympic team who are legal immigrants would not have been eligible to receive assistance had they needed it as children.

In announcing he would sign the

lion people) have become increasingly terrified that Hutu extremists are planning a Rwanda-style genocide. The coup was intended to buy time and greater safety for them. Tragically, it may do just the opposite.

While the recent fears of Burundi's Tutsis are not ungrounded, the fact cannot be masked that many in the small Tutsi elite who planned the coup have steadfastly resisted all calls for majority rule and greater democracy for Burundi's 85-percent Hutu majority. The country's Tutsi-controlled army often met these calls—which long predated Rwanda's 1994 genocide—with repression or violence.

The coup has effectively undermined the credibility of both Hutu and Tutsi moderates seeking non-violent ways to accommodate the Hutu majority's understandable desire for more democratic government while ensuring the Tutsi minority's safety and survival.

The coup, which was headed by Maj. Pierre Buyoya, gives some breathing room in the short term to Burundi's ruling Tutsi elite and army. In the long run, however, it's a recipe for disaster. Time and demographics are against continued Tutsi domination. The growing effectiveness of Hutu rebel attacks—and brutal Army

reprisals against (mostly Hutu) civilians—is multiplying civilian casualties. Only serious political negotiations undertaken immediately are likely to reduce the bloodshed. The coup makes that much more difficult. It also makes the need for some form of international intervention more urgent.

The international community has not covered itself with glory in Burundi. The United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the United States and several European governments all saw the coup coming—and warned that they would deny international legitimacy to any government that came to power by force. Some who see Buyoya as a moderating influence have been tempted to modify this firm stance. But this risks boosting the credibility of those Hutu and Tutsi hard-liners who argue that might makes right.

Burundi's crisis should not be seen in isolation. The international community has failed to bring to justice those exiled Rwandan Hutus who committed genocide in Rwanda (and who continue to intimidate Rwandan refugees in Zaire and Tanzania). They

have been allowed to regroup, rearm and plan a violent, bloody return to Rwanda in the future. The exiles are now mounting cross-border raids into Rwanda to assassinate genocide survivors and backing raids by Burundian rebels. They have already forced several hundred thousand Zairians—predominantly Tutsis—from their homes and farms in northeast Zaire. Some U.N. officials estimate that without a political solution, perhaps 500,000 more Burundians may eventually flee



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into exile in Tanzania and Zaire, both already overwhelmed by unsustainable refugee burdens.

The United States has deployed two envoys to support various peace initiatives by both Burundians and former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere. On June 25, leaders of Burundi and neighboring countries hammered out a tentative agreement in Arusha, Tanzania, establishing an African intervention force that would ensure greater safety for civilians and protection for vital infrastructure increasingly disrupted by rebel actions. Some Hutu and Tutsi political leaders have attacked the plan, fearing it may help their opponents. The international community must move fast to ensure that this effort gets the political, financial and logistical support it needs.

It won't be easy or popular in a presidential election year for the Clinton administration to seek the necessary funding and political support from a Republican-dominated, austerity-minded and increasingly isolationist Congress. But can we or the international community afford another Rwanda?

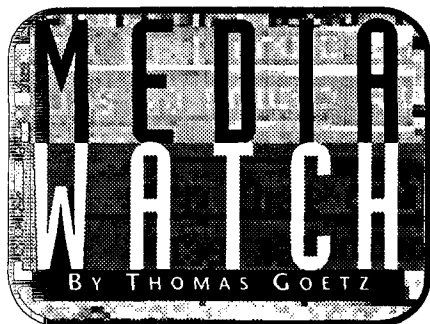
—Carole J.L. Collins

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The last emperor's last eunuch

SUN YAOTING, THE LAST LIVING IMPERIAL EUNUCH, IS SPENDING HIS FINAL days in a bedroom in Beijing's Guang Hua temple. "Sun was born in 1902, two years before Deng Xiaoping, when thousands of eunuchs still controlled the life of the emperor just as they had done for three millennia," writes Jasper Becker in the *South China Morning Post*. Sun last left his temple five years ago. He shared his impressions from that day with Becker: "It was astonishing," he said. "Beijing is now so full of cars, new roads and tall buildings. And the Forbidden City looks different too. I don't remember the walls being so red." —J.B.





Rush, flushed

September 6, 1996 will be a great day for Feminazis and the Liberal Media Elite: On that day, Rush Limbaugh's television show, *Rush Limbaugh*, goes off the air. Launched in 1991 as a spinoff of his radio show, Limbaugh's TV version took off fast. Giving a fat, jolly face to hate and disinformation, Limbaugh's show quickly became the nation's leading late-night syndicated program, even challenging Leno and Letterman in some markets. With Clinton in the White House, Limbaugh became Broadcast Central for the opposition, and Rush's audience and authority took off. Even PBS was pulled in when KBDI, a Denver affiliate, put Rush on five nights a week. "You're watching one of the hottest shows in America," Limbaugh boasted. His domination seemed absolute.

In hindsight, though, the signs of decline had been growing for months. In February 1995, a Christian TV station in Ohio—ostensibly his target audience—booted Rush for being too offensive. Other viewers complained he was getting stale and too reserved—especially after the GOP swept Congress. "When Rush started on the air, he was the voice of rebel conservatism," Randall Bloomquist, editor of *Radio & Records* newsletter, told the *Los Angeles Times* last December. "Now he's come down out of the mountains, and he's part of the conservative provisional government." More apt to appease conservative politicians than prod them, Rush's show lost its urgency even while Rush himself gained clout. From a high of 4 million viewers in 1994, the audience dwindled to fewer than 2 million this

past May. Limbaugh's radio audience remains, by all accounts, massive, with some 20 million tuning in each week. And Limbaugh insists that it was his call to pull the plug on the TV show. But without Rush on TV, it could be up to Rosie O'Donnell to start showing some ire.

On the corporate dole

The Olympics have ended in Atlanta and the Republican Convention is heating up in San Diego—but for America's transnational conglomerates, the whole summer is one long endorsement festival. Whether it's athletes or politicians, American big business loves to show support for the home team—especially if they get to run some commercials touting it. So, as a Media Watch Olympic/Convention Tribute, we offer the following contest: Try to match the following companies with the event or organization that got their cash. Grand prize—the peace of mind that you know who corporate America is paying off this summer.

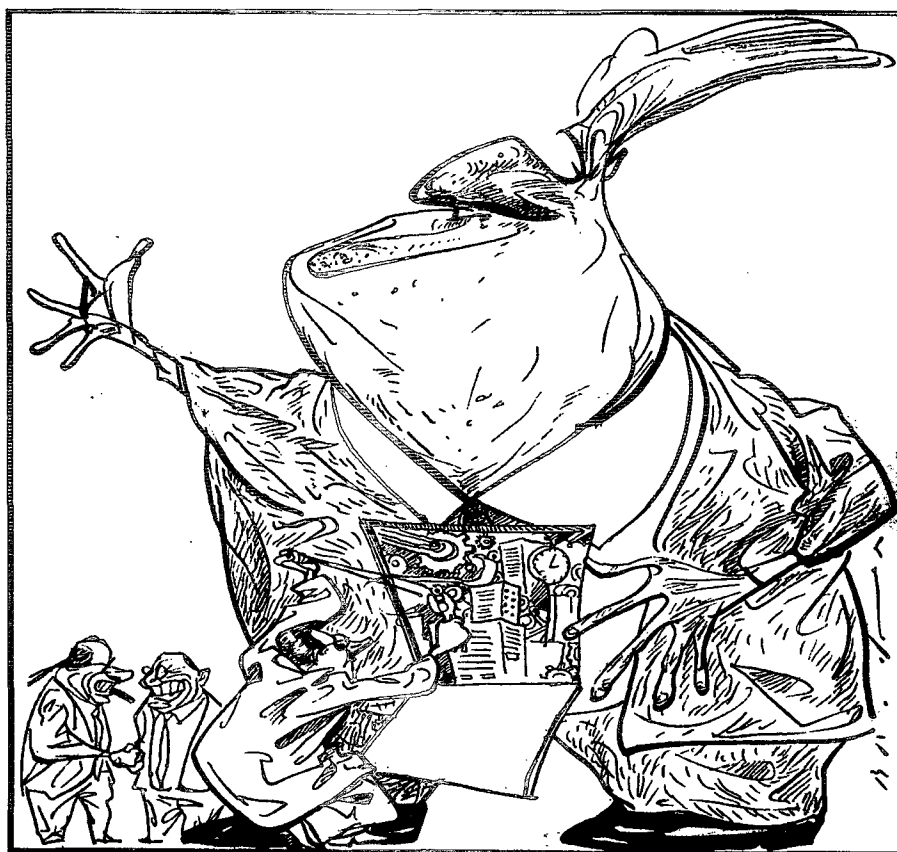
1. Philip Morris
2. PepsiCo
3. Coca Cola
4. United Airlines
5. Kraft Foods
6. Federal Express
7. Texaco

- A. Family Day at the San Diego Zoo
- B. The Dream Team
- C. California GOP Victory Train
- D. Olympic Torch relay
- E. GOP Beach Party
- F. International Olympic Committee
- G. GOP Team 100 Dinner

Answers: 1-C, 2-C, 3-F, 4-E, 5-A, 6-B, 7-D.

TOMORROW'S NEWS TONIGHT

By Steve Brodner



Yeltsin lives. Disney company agrees to secretly animate him.

CHALLENGE TO SUHARTO

The critically acclaimed 1983 film *The Year of Living Dangerously* depicts Indonesia enveloped by chaos after the collapse of the long reign of Indonesia's revered first president, Sukarno. The July 27 riot in Jakarta—the most violent street demonstration since Suharto took power in 1966—has fueled speculation that such turbulent times may be close at hand.

The riot broke out in reaction to the forcible eviction of supporters of opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri, Sukarno's daughter, from the headquarters of her Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI). The government hoped the raid would curb her influence, particularly among the country's youth who are frustrated by Suharto's refusal to open up the political system. Rather than undermine her authority, however, the raid catapulted Megawati into a position as front-line challenger to Suharto.

Ironically, while Megawati is becoming more and more popular among the general populace, she has fallen out of favor with high-ranking members of her own party. Earlier this year, with the government's backing, 16 of the PDI's 27 Central Leadership members rebelled against Megawati and organized a party congress to elect new leaders. Megawati refused to recognize the new leadership. In defiance of a government order to vacate the premises, she turned the PDI headquarters into an open stage for pro-democracy, anti-government forces, who were happy to rally behind a leader with such widespread popular appeal.

Are we seeing the development of another "people power" movement similar to the one that brought Corazon Aquino to power in the Philippines? It is unlikely. Aquino was supported by the Catholic Church in a Catholic-majority country. By contrast, Megawati comes from a family and a party that are not considered to

A bigot of a different color

PAT BUCHANAN MIGHT HAVE BETTER LUCK GETTING PODIUM TIME AT THE convention of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANUPF). He and Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe share more than authoritarian tendencies; both are unabashed homophobes. Mugabe's well-established anti-gay bigotry has escalated, reports the British *Guardian's* Andrew Meldrum. Zimbabwe's Ministry of Information has banned the country's only gay and lesbian group, Gala, and tried to prohibit it from participating in Zimbabwe's premier cultural event, the annual book fair that opened on July 30 in Harare. The government claims it is "protecting Zimbabwe's cultural values." For its part, ZANUPF has threatened to bash Gala members—that is, if members of "Zimbabwe's Cultural Police," a university group, don't make good on a similar promise first. Mugabe's thugs have already attacked Peter Ripken, a representative of the Frankfurt Book Fair, who had expressed support for Gala. —J.B.

represent Islamic interests in a country with a Muslim majority. Marcos' top generals deserted him in his final days. In Indonesia, the top military brass seem to be firmly behind Suharto.

Megawati must choose her next step carefully. If she continues to oppose the government, she runs the risk of being detained like Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. The government has already begun to crack down on other opposition party leaders, trade unionists and human rights advocates. Megawati does not, however, have the same stature as San Suu Kyi. While San Suu Kyi's party won the election before she was placed under house arrest, Megawati's party has never garnered more than 15 percent of the vote. Alternatively, Megawati could choose to air her grievances through the judicial system. This course of action would be difficult given the government's tight control over the courts. Nevertheless, a court battle would open up debate about the political system.

Regardless of what she does next, Megawati and her supporters are not yet strong enough to bring down the Suharto regime. The riot, however, could force the president to introduce much-needed political reforms. If he doesn't, the opposition movement is bound to gather steam.

—Andi A. Mallarangeng

DISAPPEARING HISTORY

ABC News' longtime Paris bureau chief Pierre Salinger has concluded that the Reagan-Bush campaign did sabotage President Carter's Iran-hostage talks in 1980, and that the so-called October Surprise allegations are true. Salinger documented his conclusions in an eight-paragraph section of his memoirs, *P.S.*, recently published in France—eight paragraphs that St. Martin's Press cut from its English-language edition.

Through well-placed contacts in France, Salinger confirmed that then-GOP campaign director William J. Casey arranged secret meetings with Iranian emissaries in Paris in October 1980, and that Western intelligence services sealed the deal with an airlift of military supplies to Iran.

Salinger served as ABC News' Paris bureau chief during the 444-day hostage crisis. It was there, after the release of the hostages on January 20, 1981, that Salinger "ran into one of the hottest stories of [his] journalistic career." He said "a man named Jacques Montanes showed up at my ABC office with a big bag full of papers." These papers, along with other information discovered by

Salinger, documented an international airlift of military supplies to Iran on October 24, 1980. Companies in France, Great Britain, Spain and Israel were involved in this airlift, which took place in defiance of President Carter's arms embargo. Because of some problems with the delivery, Montanes had been detained in Iran for nine months before being released.

"He was angry at Iran for what they had done and wanted to get a story of important truth to the media," Salinger wrote. "Obviously, I broke this story on *ABC News*," he continued, "something that shocked the American government." In the early 1980s, however, allegations had yet to surface about Republican collaboration with the intelligence agencies in Israel and Europe that had arranged the airlift.

Only in the years after the Iran-Contra scandal broke in late 1986 did a number of witnesses, including senior Iranian officials and international arms dealers, allege that Reagan's dealings with Iran dated back to the 1980 campaign. These witnesses described a series of meetings, including a round in Madrid in late July and a final set in Paris in mid-October.

Casey, the crafty old World War II spy master who moved on to become CIA director, died in the spring of 1987. His family and other Republicans have denied any election hostage deal. In attacking the story, Reagan-Bush loyalists have been aided by elements of the news media. In 1991, *Newsweek* and *The New Republic* published matching cover stories supposedly debunking the charges, using the same bogus alibi to disprove Casey's presence at the Madrid meeting.

"Well, having looked into this case quite a lot, I don't agree with [these publications]," Salinger wrote in the deleted book passage. Salinger was convinced by a statement by a respected American journalist, David Andelman, who ghost-wrote the memoirs of French spy chief Alexandre de Marenches in 1992. At Salinger's request, Andelman pressured Marenches for information. Salinger wrote:

"Andelman came back to me and said that Marenches had finally agreed [that] he organized the meeting, under the request of an old friend, William Casey. ... Marenches and Casey had known each other well during the days of World War II. Marenches added that while he prepared the meeting, he did not attend it."

In December 1992, Andelman testified before the House October Surprise task force about Marenches' admission. The task force, however, dismissed Andelman's testimony, as it did other supporting evidence.

Salinger wrote that he had other information corroborating Marenches' statement to Andelman. "In the mid-'80s, I had a long and important meeting with a top official in French intelligence," Salinger wrote. "He confirmed to me that the U.S.-Iranian meeting did take place on October 18 and 19 and he knew that Marenches had written a report on it which was

in intelligence files. Unfortunately, he told me that file had disappeared."

Ironically, Salinger's account of his October Surprise reporting suffered a similar fate, excised from his English-language memoirs and "disappeared" from official American history—like so much of the other October Surprise evidence.

—Robert Parry

Sources

Katherine Sciacchitano is a former labor lawyer who now teaches at the University of Wisconsin School for Workers.

Carole J.L. Collins is diplomatic correspondent for the *National Catholic Reporter*.

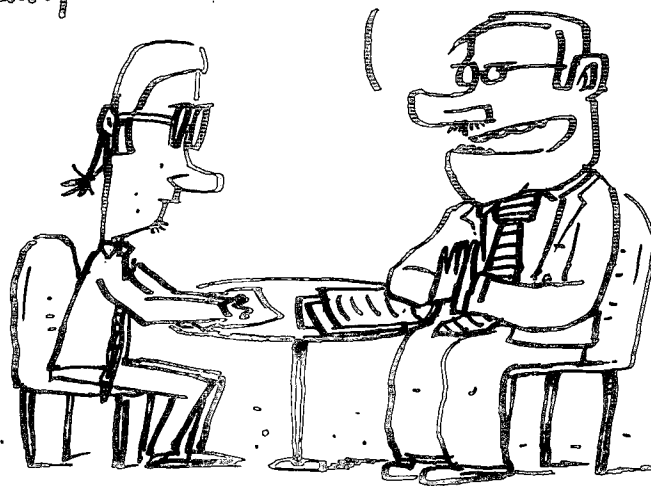
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Robert Parry is editor of *The Consortium*, from which this story is adapted. For a sample copy, call (800) 738-1812.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan

I don't know diddly squat about all this technology crap, so if you promise, cross your heart and hope to die, that you do know diddly squat, you're hired.



T H E F I R S T S T O N E

POWER PLAYS

By Joel Bleifuss

In almost every state across the nation, public service commissions are taking steps to deregulate the electric power industry. Utility deregulation is not a sexy issue, but the decisions being made quietly today will affect citizens' pocketbooks and the earth's environment for decades to come. True to the nature of a political system where money buys power—electric or otherwise—the deregulation process is likely to provide private utility companies with the benefits of a free market while continuing to protect them from the harshness of the market's invisible hand.

Federal deregulation got under way with little fanfare on April 24, when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the obscure agency that oversees the nation's utility companies, ordered the 130 or so investor-owned utilities to provide competitors access to their transmission grid systems. Utility companies that produce cheap power can now sell power to other companies that generate more expensive electricity. In theory, the savings should be passed along to all consumers in the form of cheaper energy prices.

This federally ordered deregulation affects only the wholesale market, not residential users. Public service commissions in each state retain the authority to set the terms of this deregulation and, if they choose, to bring deregulation down to the level of individual households. Currently, state public service commissions tightly regulate energy rates. Utility companies must justify their rates to the state commission in order to get approval for them. The final form that deregulation takes will, therefore, be hammered out at the state level. As things are shaping up, deregulation will probably benefit the large corporations—both those that produce the electricity and those that use it—at the expense of individual consumers and small businesses.

Some states are allowing large corporate users of electric power, such as auto plants, to shop around for better rates. Utility companies are under pressure to lower rates for manufacturers in order to hang on to their business. The utilities make up this lost revenue by raising rates for ordinary citizens

and small businesses. This year in Michigan, for example, the Consumers Power Co. raised electricity rates for its 1.4 million residential users by 8.2 percent (\$42 annually on a typical bill) while lowering rates for the state's 9,000 industrial users by an average of 4.2 percent. For some corporate giants, such as General Motors, Dow-Corning and Pharmacia & Upjohn, rates were slashed by up to 20 percent.

California has taken a different tack, adopting a more progressive deregulatory plan for the state's \$20 billion electricity market. Rather than open up a wholesale market where big users can shop around for the best rates, the California Public Utilities Commission requires the state's three largest electric utilities to join a wholesale power pool that would be run

by an independent agency. The agency would act as a middleman, buying the cheapest available power from the utilities and selling it to customers.

Under this plan, corporate users and residential customers would be treated equally, since the pool prevents large electricity users from applying the leverage they would have enjoyed in a more open market to get lower rates. Residential users would be allowed to buy from the pool if they installed special meters. Residential and industrial customers would pay the same rates, which would vary depending on the time of day—power would be cheaper during low-demand periods and vice versa. Rates across the board would probably drop.

Wall Street Journal pundits hate the California plan. "It is something only devotees of Ira Magaziner's health care 'purchasing alliances' could love," wrote Max Boot in a *Journal* op-ed piece. "Free marketers support a 'direct access' approach [wherein] electricity users, marketers and generators would have the right to negotiate with each other any way they want."

Of course, even the free marketers don't want a truly open electricity market since many private utility companies, saddled with what are euphemistically known as "stranded assets," would go bankrupt. According to a report by researchers at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, 25 utility companies are threatened with potential losses of \$1 billion or more from these unwise or expensive investments. The new federal rules will allow utility companies such as Commonwealth Edison in Illinois and Long Island Lighting Co. in New York to pass on the costs of their stranded assets to the consumer in the form of fees or surcharges on their electricity bill. According to Moody's Investors Service, utility companies have about \$135 billion in debt, which the new rules will allow them to recover from customers.

California's big utility companies, which helped draft the state's deregulation plan, are going along with the pooling arrangement largely because it includes this provision to deal

with their uneconomical investments. Southern California Edison, for example, has \$12.4 billion in stranded assets—2.5 times the total shareholder equity in the company. The new plan allows them to phase out expensive nuclear power plants and pass the loss on to consumers, who would find that cost noted on a special line on their bill.

Neither the general public nor the media has expressed much interest in utility deregulation. After all, few issues are less exciting—and more complex. The utility companies are happy to have the stage to themselves. “If we don’t restructure, someone else will do it for us. And that could put us at a distinct disadvantage,” writes Richard Abdoo, president and CEO of Wisconsin Energy Corp., in *Public Utilities Fortnightly*.

Apprehension about upcoming deregulation no doubt helped spark the more than 35 mergers or purchases of utilities that took place last year. Abdoo’s Wisconsin Energy Corp., for instance, joined forces with the Northern States Power Co. to become the Primergy Corp., the nation’s 10th largest investor-owned utility. As Agis Salpukas reported in the *New York Times*, “The merger would leave the companies in a strong position to defend their turf and perhaps raid that of other utilities when deregulation took hold.” The flurry of mergers has made government regulators nervous. Some members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission have voiced fears that the rapid consolidation of electric companies might in some instances “seriously hinder competition” and undo any benefits that might come from deregulation.

Public interest groups are concerned about the environmental and social consequences of deregulation. For example, in an open market, Midwest utilities that burn low-grade coal could send Easterners quantities of both cheap power and sulfurous air-borne pollutants. Deregulation could also waylay current efforts to promote alternative energy sources and electric efficiency. Utility-bill support programs that help the poor and indigent could also be derailed.

In an attempt to avoid these negative consequences, many public interest groups have proposed their own deregulation plans. Earlier this year, the Natural Resources Defense Council coordinated the publication of a “joint consumer/environmental statement for electric utility restructuring in the public interest.” The statement endorses a California-style pooling plan for New York state, but goes on to demand that the New York Public Service Commission, when drawing up its plan for deregulation, “fund low-income services and elderly programs” and “invest in ener-

gy efficiency, renewable technologies, and research and development projects that provide significant public benefits.” The money for these programs, the statement suggests, could be raised from a mandatory “system benefits charge” collected by the utility company or by the new public agency that would be in charge of distributing power from the pool to electricity customers.

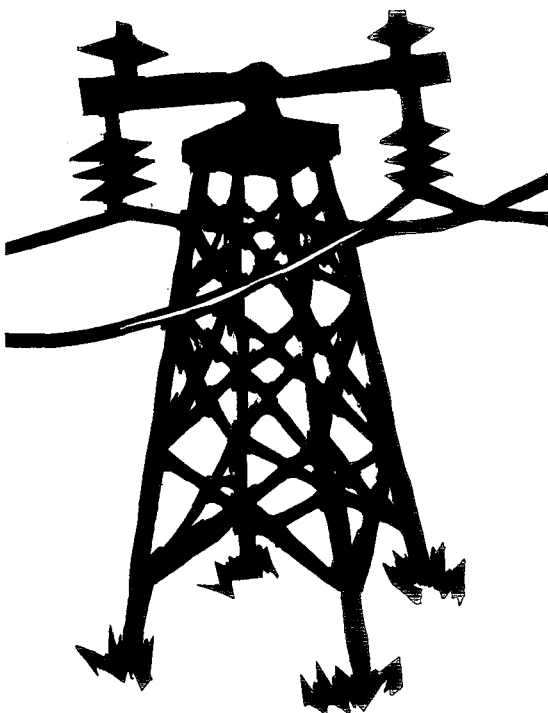
This past June, a coalition of environmental and consumer groups released a manifesto, *Power for the People*. This “blueprint” outlines a “comprehensive set of policies designed to protect consumers from higher bills, promote energy efficiency and renewable energy programs, guarantee service for low-income and rural customers, and ensure that ratepayers are not forced to shoulder the full costs incurred by utilities due to uneconomical investments [stranded assets].” Unlike the California Public Utility Commission’s plan, the blueprint says that the losses from stranded assets—which could run between \$8 billion and \$20 billion in California alone—should be borne by the utility company in all but the most extreme cases. “Utilities must take responsibility for making bad business decisions that resulted in uneconomical power plants,” says Ed Maschke, executive director of the California Public Interest

Research Group. “The Public Utility Commission-ordered bailout of these investments needs to be stopped now. Legislators need to recognize how their constituents will be impacted. Voters are going to be very unhappy when they get this horrendous bill under the guise of increased competition and lower prices.”

Proposals like these make conservative pundits like the *Wall Street Journal*’s Tim Ferguson see red. “The Natural Resources Defense Council and allied socialists plan to try to tie up deregulation for years by demanding a kitchen sink ‘environmental impact report,’ ” he wrote in a *Journal* op-ed piece last year.

Concerned citizens might also consider more radical measures, such as establishing publicly owned utility companies. On average, such citizen-controlled utilities sell electricity that is 25 percent cheaper than their private counterparts. Since 1980, more than 33 municipalities have opted to switch to public power. Imagine the response if “sewer socialism” were to catch on. Ferguson and his pals would really hit the roof.

Research provided by Sarah Hayford.



SPORTS

The great stadium swindle

“C

Financially strapped cities are pouring money into giant new sports facilities—and the pockets of corporate team owners.

By Joanna Cagan and
Neil deMause

Council Approves Deal for Stadium” blared the headline across the front page of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* on March 9. After months of political wrangling and public melodrama, the Cleveland City Council had just approved \$220 million—most of it in public money—to fund a new stadium to house a football team that would replace the Cleveland Browns. The previous fall, the Browns’ owner, multimillionaire and GOP fundraiser Art Modell, announced he was moving the team to Baltimore to play in a new \$200 million publicly funded stadium.

A headline in the same paper, a day earlier: “Cleveland Schools to Cut Sports, Teachers.” The accompanying story reported that the Cleveland school system, in the worst financial shape of any school district in the country, according to its superintendent, planned to

lay off up to 160 teachers and eliminate interscholastic athletics.

Four years earlier, used-car magnate Bud Selig approached the state of Wisconsin for land on which to build a new stadium for his Milwaukee Brewers baseball team—just land, he insisted, not a penny of public money. The state said OK, even though the land Selig desired had an expressway sitting on top of it, an expressway that would have to be moved at a cost to the state of some \$6 million.

Then, last summer, Selig got around to asking the state if he could have just a *little* public money. Gov. Tommy Thompson, the same governor renowned for his draconian approach to welfare, pulled key politicians into his office for a series of closed-door meetings. They emerged with a stadium plan that could cost the state as much as \$880 million in construction costs and interest payments, while the Brewers would only be responsible for securing a \$50 million loan. At last word, Selig was trying to get the state to pick up the loan as well.

Meanwhile, in Seattle last September, residents were invited to vote in a referendum on whether to raise local sales taxes in order to pay for a new stadium for the Seattle Mariners baseball team. (The old stadium, the Kingdome, was built in 1976 with \$67 million in public funds.) On one side, the Mariners’ owners (including electronics giant Nintendo) mounted a tremendous campaign for a yes vote; the *Seattle Times* donated free ad space to the campaign. On the other, a handful of underfunded groups rallied against the massive use of public funds. Against all expectations, the referendum was defeated by a narrow margin. The following month, the state legislature passed a new tax on restaurants and car rentals—dubbed an “emergency measure” to avoid having to submit to another referendum—and the Mariners had their stadium.

If you can’t be a defense contractor, the best way to get public funds for private gain these days seems to be to own a professional sports team. While local governments lay off workers and slash welfare rolls, spending on new sports facilities is booming at a pace unheard of since the early ’70s: Well over half of all pro football and baseball teams are either planning a new stadium or already ensconced in one—virtually all at public expense.

Even as corporate welfare goes, sports stadiums are a questionable investment for cities. Tax breaks to, say, keep a factory in town might at least guarantee a few thousand jobs. But sports subsidies, despite local politicians’ claims to the contrary, just wind up in the pockets of team owners and a few players. The jobs created are “mostly low-paying, even below minimum wage often—parking garage attendants, hot dog sales people, waiters and waitresses,” says John Ryan, head of Communications Workers of America

Local 4309 in Cleveland. "None of them are jobs that the mayor hugs his kids and says, 'I hope you can get one of those jobs someday.'"

Stadium backers counter that the real benefits of stadium building come from indirect economic gains. Sports fans, they argue, spend money not just on tickets and hot dogs but on hotels, restaurants and other local businesses. The entire municipal boat supposedly floats on the rising tide of sports revenues. The *Plain Dealer* spouted this conventional wisdom in a front-page editorial last November urging voters to approve an extension on the local "sin tax" for stadium renovations. The editorial crowed about the "tens of millions of dollars" the Browns bring to the city of Cleveland. New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who is proposing a \$1 billion Manhattan sports complex for the Yankees and an unspecified football team, has bought the same bill of goods. He told the *New York Times* last April that such a stadium "could be built at little or no cost to the city's taxpayers."

Evidence, however, suggests that promises of economic windfalls are simply untrue. Robert Baade of Lake Forest

College concluded in a 1994 study for the Heartland Institute on the impact of new sports facilities that "far from generating new revenue out of which other public projects can be funded, sports 'investments' appear to be an economically unsound use of a community's scarce financial resources." In that study, Baade looked at 30 new stadiums or arenas over a 30-year period and discovered that the impact on the local economy in 27 cases was nil. And in the remaining three cases—St. Louis, the San Francisco Bay Area and Washington, D.C.—the new sports facilities appeared to have *hurt* the local economy.

Baade argues that any increased municipal income is merely a result of a shift in spending from one form of entertainment to another. "If you draw larger and larger circles away from the place where the sporting event actually occurs, it's more and more likely that you're going to have a zero-sum game," he said in an interview. "In the



case of Wisconsin, it may well be that you're taking money away from a dog racing track in Racine when you subsidize Brewers baseball. It may be that people who ordinarily go to the racetrack may now go up to Milwaukee to see a game at the new retractable-dome stadium. But you have to wonder about the implications for other entertainment activities in Racine."

The other argument of public stadium backers—that the huge revenue streams produced by new stadiums will allow local governments to pay off incurred debts—is even more dubious. "If you're going to build an \$800 million Yankee Stadium," says sports economics expert Roger Noll of the Brookings Institution, "it's going to cost you \$45 to \$50 million a year to finance that debt, and another \$10 million or so to operate the facility. Compare that with any revenues the city might obtain because of the presence of the stadium, and the revenue stream is an order of magnitude

lower than the cost stream.”

Ironically, this state of affairs is abetted by the tax-exempt bonds that cities use to finance stadium construction projects. These bonds reduce cities' own debt payments at the expense of the federal treasury. According to Noll, since localities must show that the revenue generated by a stadium is less than 10 percent of the annual cost of the debt service, the desire for tax-exempt bonds has actually encouraged money-losing stadium projects.

Noll estimates that 30 percent of a project funded by tax-exempt bonds is thus underwritten by the federal treasury; the rest of the bill is footed largely by local governments. And the local taxes are almost invariably regressive ones: sales taxes or “sin taxes” on cigarettes and alcohol that hit the poor the hardest.

New stadiums are in fact being built on the backs of those least likely to be able to attend the games. “One of the things I’ve noticed, as a lifelong Indians fan,” says Ryan of the spanking new Jacobs Field in Cleveland, “is that the increase in prices, and the decrease in low ticket prices, has made the crowd much more white. And with the special parking and all that, the wealthier people don’t mix with the working-class people. And to me that’s disturbing.”

Disney. Little Caesar’s Pizza. Turner Broadcasting. Nintendo. These aren’t advertisers you’re likely to see sponsoring sports telecasts or placing advertising on outfield walls. These are the corporate owners of teams themselves, every one of them figuring to reap windfalls from public largesse.

Pro sports is a speculative business; teams typically run at close to break-even on their ledgers (though in a business with closed books and such financial gimmicks as depreciating your players, it’s always hard to be sure). The real money is made when it comes time to sell your investment at a huge markup.

The biggest value booster for a sports team, hands down, is a new building, which draws in curious fans and yields millions of extra dollars in luxury-box receipts and advertising revenue. The five pro sports franchises that increased the most in value over the last year, according to *Financial World* magazine, were the Atlanta Braves (up 36 percent), Detroit Tigers (28 percent), St. Louis (formerly Los Angeles) Rams (26 percent), Cincinnati Bengals (24 percent) and Baltimore Ravens (the ex-Cleveland Browns) (23 percent). The Braves will move into a new stadium next year, the Rams moved into their new stadium last year, and the Tigers, Bengals and Ravens have recently announced new stadium deals. If New York City goes ahead with the new stadium for the Yankees, the magazine estimated, the team’s value to owner George Steinbrenner and his corporate partners would soar from \$209 million to \$356 million by the year 2004. To those yearning to make a killing in the sports world, *Financial World* recommended finding a team that meets three criteria: low current revenues, no new stadium yet in the works, and an easily breakable lease.

Sports stadiums apparently do have economic benefits,

but only owners are receiving them. Take name-lease rights, whereby stadiums are in effect treated as giant billboards on which corporations can affix their names. While bequeathing to the sports world such timeless names as Bank One Ballpark, the Trans World Dome and the Pepsi Center, the name-leasing craze doesn’t usually benefit cities at all. Instead, the fees are generally counted as part of the team’s revenue stream, even when the stadium itself is publicly owned. So when Milwaukee announced plans to name its new “old-time” stadium Miller Park (after the beer giant), the \$40 million in naming fees was counted as part of the ballclub’s contribution to its construction.

As tidy a sum as naming rights bring in, nothing compares to the income generated by stadium luxury boxes. Any sports fan who’s watched as all the best seats are bought up by corporations knows that it’s not out of fandom or civic pride, but for tax purposes. Since luxury boxes are still deductible as a business entertainment expense, up to 40 percent of the price of corporations’ purchases are underwritten by the federal government. With some new stadiums boasting as many as 200 boxes that rent at up to \$70,000 per season, this can mean as much as another \$5 million a year in indirect public subsidies to team-owner profits.

Why, in the face of the huge costs and questionable economic benefits, are local politicians willing to bend over backwards to surrender public money for new stadiums?

“There’s always the simple explanation that they actually believe the consulting reports, which is always conceivable,” says Noll. “But I think it’s important to recognize that sports are popular, and usually people who own sports teams are very well connected politically.” The bigger puzzle, he says, is “why is it the case that in many cities you can get 60 to 65 percent of the people voting to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a sports team, in an era when they’re not willing to spend money on schools or streets or other things?”

While it’s true that threatened franchise pullouts have often prompted voters to back normally unpopular tax increases, nationwide opposition to such giveaways has been mounting. In Detroit, a group of fans and public-policy advocates banded together as the Tiger Stadium Fan Club after the city last December overturned a public referendum that had blocked public funds from being used to replace that historic ballpark, which has no luxury boxes. “Detroit only got \$63 million in [federal] block grants last year,” according to Kim Stroud of the Tiger Stadium Fan Club. “The stadium’s going to cost \$240 million. It’s kind of out of whack.” But despite garnering 11,000 members, the fan club was unable to counter a \$600,000 pro-stadium advertising campaign, losing a repeat referendum this March by a nearly 4-to-1 margin. A separate lawsuit by the fan club against the use of state funds for the stadium ended in defeat just two days later.

In Seattle, there was enough public activism to send the stadium-tax referendum down to a narrow defeat. When

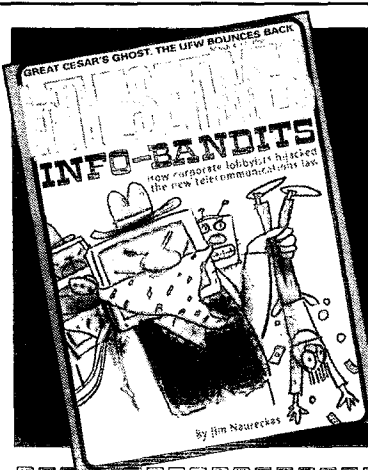
the state legislature turned around and passed a stadium tax anyway, attorney Shawn Newman sued on behalf of citizens' groups in Seattle seeking another referendum to block new stadium financing. (The case lost at the trial court level in February, and is currently under appeal.) "In my last statement to the judge," says Newman, "I said: 'Where do people go when they've said no? The polls say they don't want this publicly funded, and the legislators just ignore that. Where do they go but the courts?'"

Even in Baltimore—where the glistening new Camden Yards baseball stadium is often held up as the modern architectural paragon for new ballparks—popular opinion on whether to fund the new stadium was extremely divided. But an attempt to force a public referendum on the deal was shot down by the courts in 1987, which ruled that private citizens had no power to challenge what it considered an appropriations bill. "In other words," wrote Peter Richmond in his book *Ballpark*, "the court ruled that the stadium funding was a necessity to maintain the operation of the state. The governor, of course, agreed wholeheartedly with the interpretation, even if some of his constituents—those without jobs, those trying to learn in a Baltimore school system that ranked among the nation's lowest in reading test scores—did not see a ballpark as a necessary ingredient of state government."

"The fundamental fact of life concerning stadiums and arenas," noted James Quirk and Rodney D. Fort in their definitive 1992 book on sports economics, *Pay Dirt*, "is that once they are built, they are fixed in place, while the teams that use them are potentially mobile." Combine this with the monopolistic nature of professional sports (leagues actually grant exclusive regional franchises to each club owner), and you have the now-common scene of cities bidding against each other for the right to hand over chunks of the public treasury to sports owners. Even expansion by the sports leagues hasn't dulled the threat of moving your team; if it's no longer possible to make eyes at Los Angeles (as the Dodgers did in trying to get a new stadium from Brooklyn 40 years ago), team owners will hold up the prospect of departing for places like Sacramento or Charlotte. The competition is now so extreme that the city of Baltimore not only promised a 30-year rent-free lease to lure the Browns, but it also chipped in a \$50 million signing bonus—in effect, directly *paying* the team to play in the city.

It's a sight that appalls many sports fans even as they find themselves reluctant participants in our newest national pastime. "Ten stadiums aren't going to do what's needed for Detroit, and I think most really understand that," says the Tiger Stadium Fan Club's Stroud. "But you still get into the kind of hysteria about 'Oh my god, what would we do without a sports team?' You're missing opportunities to spend money on things that actually will create economic growth for your area, and that's obscene, as far as I'm concerned."

Joanna Cagan and Neil deMause are on the editorial collective of *Brooklyn Metro Times*, a quarterly political zine.



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A blast from the past

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hen Teamster President Ron Carey took the podium to open the union's convention in mid-July, half of the several thousand delegates and visitors erupted in a deafening roar of boos and taunts. The jeering disrupted Archbishop Bevilacqua's prayer and the moment of silence for deceased Teamsters. The ruckus prevailed throughout the convention, leaving voices raspy and rough for days.

The initial outburst set the tone for the convention and symbolized the continuing division in the 1.4 million-member Teamsters union, the largest in the AFL-CIO. The thuggish, intimidating show of force was organized by supporters of James P. Hoffa Jr., son of the union's president from 1958 to 1971 who was known both for the power he wielded and his ties to organized crime. Hoffa, a 55-year-old attorney who has never held an

elected union office or worked as a Teamster except for summer jobs in his college years, is challenging Carey for the presidency. He is backed by the old-guard camp, which hopes to regain its dominance.

The union's presidential election will, in part, be a referendum on the past: Carey, trumpeting progress in "putting members first," as his campaign slogan reads, charges that Hoffa will return the union to its corrupt old ways of putting officers first. Hoffa, denying past corruption, conjures visions of a golden age when Teamsters and other unions had more clout. ("Restore the power" is his slogan.)

The election, by mail ballot of members this November, will not only determine the fate of reform within the Teamsters union but will also be a barometer of the health of the new unionism. Carey, 60, was a crucial backer of John Sweeney's successful bid for the presidency of the AFL-CIO. Under Carey, the Teamsters have become a key leader in forging broad progressive coalitions and in

developing new strategies to fight corporations. Carey has polished the union's public image, eliminating one of the staples of anti-union invective.

The Teamsters' history is less than glorious. Organized crime families controlled several past presidents, and many local union chiefs were either linked to the Mob or otherwise corrupt. In 1991, the federal government negotiated a consent decree with former Teamsters leaders. In exchange for the dismissal of racketeering charges, the union agreed to a government-supervised election and continued oversight by the federal courts and an Independent Review Board (IRB), which has the authority to investigate and discipline wayward officials. Carey, a former leader of a Long Island, N.Y., local of UPS workers, won the presidency in the union's first direct ballot by members. Pledging to clean up the union and to make it serve its members better, Carey swept into office with the backing of a powerful grass-roots movement spearheaded by the two-decade-old Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU).

One of Carey's chief challenges as president has been to get the union's finances into shape. In 1991, with support from one old-guard faction and Carey's small camp, the union convention nearly quadrupled strike benefits without providing new funding. Upon assuming the presidency, Carey discovered that the international had not been living within its dues income for many years and, because of the huge new strike payments, the union's assets were rapidly disappearing. He proposed a dues increase in 1994 but the measure was defeated—in part because of opposition from the old guard and in part because Carey's team did a poor job of justifying it to the membership.

Without this additional revenue, the international had to

Teamster President Ron Carey struggles to preserve union democracy as Jimmy Hoffa Jr. makes a bid to unseat him.

By David Moberg
PHILADELPHIA

pare its expenses. Carey suspended strike benefits, eliminated a costly layer of conferences (a source of perks and power for the old guard), and continued to cut excesses. The modest pre-1991 strike benefits have recently been restored, and the international now lives within its means. Nevertheless, Hoffa still focuses much of his attack on the union's troubled finances under Carey.

A second critical issue has been the balance of power between the international and the various union locals. The Teamsters has long been a decentralized collection of local baronies that control 82 percent of the union's resources. While cutting waste, Carey has greatly beefed up operations at the international level, which had been poorly funded in comparison with other unions.

In a bid to empower the rank and file, Carey massively expanded educational programs and efforts to inform members about their union. The union reached out in particular to neglected groups such as Latinos and women. Carey encouraged more cooperation among locals in bargaining and in developing joint strategies within industries. He expanded the organizing department, which has coordinated national campaigns (such as a successful ongoing drive at Overnite, the largest non-union trucking firm). He has also bolstered local union organizing efforts, and encouraged hundreds of members to volunteer as organizers.

This focus on organizing is now bearing fruit: After 16 years of declining membership, last year the Teamsters finally began to grow again.

After many years of favoring the Republicans, the Teamsters under Carey has become one of the more progressive unions. They are stressing grass-roots issues rather than simply focusing on party politics. (The Teamsters, while acknowledging that Clinton is preferable to Dole, have not formally endorsed the president's re-election.) Carey has brought in a top-notch staff that has crafted new strategies to attack corporations on a variety of fronts. He has turned strikes, for example, into broader community campaigns for justice. He has challenged company executives with stockholder actions. And he has linked up with Mexican truckers to discuss common post-NAFTA strategies and with European unions to pressure foreign transnationals in the United States.

In a tough bargaining climate, Carey has scored some significant gains in major contracts. He blocked the expansion of non-union operations and part-time workers at the major freight-trucking and car-hauling companies, and has won guarantees that workers will be regarded as innocent until proven guilty in discipline cases.

Carey's actions have unleashed new energy among many Teamsters. Tim Buban, a 41-year-old truck driver from Milwaukee, only became involved in the union after Carey was elected. "My life changed," he said. "Before '91, if I showed up to a union meeting with a question, I was told to shut the 'F' up. Now anyone who wants to be a decision-maker in the union can be, and I'm living proof." A year and half ago, Buban successfully ran for local union office with an



Teamster President Ron Carey
greet supporters at a rally in
Philadelphia last month.

insurgent slate. The new team has since organized 600 new members, "more than the local had organized probably in 25 years," he said.

At his brewery local in Connecticut, Chris Roos had been demoralized by local union officials who once told the company openly that they wouldn't back him in a grievance hearing. After receiving advice from a Carey administration vice president, Roos and others protested the local president's incompetence and forced him to step down. Roos has recently been elected a business agent and trustee. He said his local has filed—and won—more grievances in the past year than in the previous two decades combined. "It turned the whole local around," he said of the ousting of the former local president. "Now the members are getting great representation. It gave us back our union and a

voice to be heard." The international also sent in corporate campaign expert Ron Carver to help in the local's contract fight. As a result, members won their first pension and greatly improved their health coverage. "This was all done through the international," Roos said, "and the members saw that."

Not everyone views the past four and a half years in the same way. Pat Kirkman, a local union officer from Topeka, Kan., didn't support Carey in 1991 and still doesn't. She criticized Carey for proposing a dues increase in 1994 and believes he has wasted the union's money. Also, she charges, he has used the power of his office to silence critics. "He's trusted locals that never should have been trusted, just because they spoke out against him," she says. Kirkman is a devotee of Hoffa. "If he follows through with all his promises," she says, "this union will be restored to the powerful union it once was."

The confrontation at this year's convention was essentially a continuation of the battle between the reformers and old guard. Convention delegates, however, cannot all be easily slotted into one of the two camps. Many of the worst old-guard leaders are gone, removed either by the IRB or by the Carey administration itself. Many local union officials are simply well-meaning "business unionists" who run their own locals as best they can and have little contact with the rest of the union.

During the past five years, Carey has slowly built up support among leaders who were not deeply committed to either reform or the old guard. Reformers have steadily gained more local offices, though TDU has not yet managed to make its presence felt in a majority of locals. A large number of the middle-ground Teamster officials and a few from the "old guard" have rallied behind Carey. Carey maintains that he "extended the olive branch" to his opponents after his election in 1991. Some accepted the offer; others hung back. A good number never ceased to attack him. The hard-core conservatives actively sabotaged Carey's first term in many ways—by refusing to distribute information from the international to members, for example, and by undermining the big trucking contract strike in 1994 and the one-day safety strike against UPS the same year.

Carey has had to perform a tricky balancing act: On the one hand, he has had to inspire members to advance reforms, while on the other, he has had to win over old-guard local leaders who may not fully share a democratic vision. Some Carey supporters think that he should have tried harder initially to recruit the middle-ground officials. On the other hand, some rank-and-file reformers complain that Carey, owing to his olive branch strategy, failed to support them in local elections against the old guard.

Carey's opponents portray him as a dictator, undermining the autonomy of local leaders, retaliating against opponents, driving the union into bankruptcy, and failing to



Jimmy Hoffa Jr. (left) and Bill Hogan Jr. press the flesh at last month's Teamsters convention.

deliver on major contracts. They contend he has divided and weakened the union. They accuse him of personal financial misdeeds and suggest that he is controlled by the Mob or by "outsiders" such as the staff he hired from other unions. When the IRB cleared Carey of charges of corruption and links to organized crime in July 1994, his critics simply saw the decision as proof that Carey is a government agent working to destroy the Teamsters.

Carey's critics used the convention to drive home their attacks. Carey has more support than Hoffa among rank-and-file members, but Hoffa is stronger among the local officials, who strongly influence the races that determine convention delegates. Hoffa's battalions were boosted by many officials who ran as uncommitted delegates but secretly supported the challenger. Last year, Carey's camp said

that it feared the old guard would throw its weight around at the convention and try to strip the presidency of its powers. Yet despite those trepidations, the Carey campaign started organizing late, after most delegates were selected.

Armed with a recent poll showing Carey leading by 47 percent to 28 percent among the rank and file, his campaign organizers became more confident of their ability to control the convention. They counted on many fence-sitting local officials deciding to go with the likely winner. Before the convention, more than half the delegates signed a pledge supporting Carey.

In the first vote, however, with floor “whips” with walkie-talkies keeping factions in line, Carey came up a few votes shy of a majority. Suddenly, his camp had to improvise a defensive strategy. Outnumbered, Carey firmly asserted—and sometimes overextended—his powers as the chair. He rushed through, for example, a couple of dubious voice votes. As a result, Carey’s supporters managed to stave off all of the most crippling Hoffa proposals. Attorneys Michael Goldberg and Paul Levy, veteran outside advocates of union democracy who were observing the convention, criticized Carey for several specific rulings. They both, however, found the convention as a whole to be more democratic and open than past conventions.

After a strong showing on the first day, the Hoffa forces lapsed into anarchic disruptions and ill-planned parliamentary battles that further delayed any business. Much of the substantive debate revolved around the balance of power within the union. The Hoffa forces wanted to deeply cut the international union budget and strip the president of authority, especially his power to intervene in local union affairs. The Carey camp countered that a strong international union was needed to advocate on behalf of the local unions since those locals were increasingly facing off against big national and transnational employers.

Carey forces also argued that a powerful international was needed to protect members against abusive and corrupt local officials. “Autonomy is not the issue,” Carey said. “Corruption is.” Arguing for strong measures to combat graft, Carey managed to push through his proposals for an ethics code for pension and health fund trustees, and for a prohibition on members associating with organized crime figures. He has imposed trustees to run more than 60 corrupt locals and used the union’s new Ethical Practices Committee to dump corrupt officials.

While at times worried about appearing to condone corruption, the Hoffa delegates clearly bristled at Carey’s clean-up actions. In one important early vote, the convention reversed the suspension of Frank Wsol, a \$400,000-a-year local official from Chicago and Hoffa’s one-time vice-presidential candidate. The union’s General Executive Board had ruled last April that Wsol and several other local officials had colluded with UPS managers to fire a union member who had criticized Wsol in the Teamsters’ magazine. Despite substantial evidence against Wsol, Hoffa partisans

portrayed him as a victim of a political vendetta.

In an astute political move, Hoffa made an unsuccessful proposal to raise strike benefits. He said the new benefits could be financed by diverting part of the dues payments to the international union into the strike fund. Such a diversion would, not so inadvertently, deeply cut into the international’s staff and Carey’s new programs. Hoffa will now campaign that Carey blocked higher strike payments. Hoffa’s aides, however, admit that the proposed strike fund would not cover a big trucker or UPS strike. Contrary to their claims, it would not even cover routine strike expenses. Hoffa’s method of financing the strike fund would also undermine the corporate campaigns that often replace or reinforce strikes.

Hoffa likes to pose brandishing a clenched fist to evoke the tough-guy Teamster image. He claims that he “learned very well at the hand of my father how to negotiate strong contracts.” But times have changed since Hoffa Sr. was at the helm: All unions were stronger then, when the economy was booming and more of the workforce was organized. In any case, the Teamsters were never strong advocates for all workers. Many local leaders cut “sweetheart” deals with employers and ignored small workplaces. Hoffa Sr.’s success with the trucking industry owed much to industry regulation, which allowed employers to pass on higher contract costs to consumers. He was also able to win strong contracts for truckers because, following the union’s longstanding proposals by socialist leaders in the union, he managed to create a national master freight agreement. Hoffa Jr.’s emphasis on local autonomy, then, runs counter to one of his father’s main achievements.

The vote in November will determine whether the Teamsters go forward with the reform efforts or revert to old habits. Although Hoffa has tried to shed the old-guard image, he can’t hide his checkered record, including his past business ties with the slain Teamster Mobster Allen Dorfman and his legal work for Teamster officials found guilty of corruption and Mob ties. The IRB is investigating corruption and possible Mob ties in the Chicago local union of Hoffa’s secretary-treasurer candidate, Bill Hogan Jr., which might knock him off the slate.

Both Hoffa and Carey received enough delegate support at the convention to be on the ballot. While Hoffa outpolled Carey 55 percent to 45 percent, Carey can take some consolation in the fact that he tripled his delegate support from 1991. Although Carey is still believed to have more strength among the rank and file, he should not be complacent. Unlike in 1991, his opponents are unified and fighting hard. Hoffa will be attacking from both left and right—appealing to populist discontent while covertly working to restore to power the remnants of the old guard. Carey, meanwhile, is preoccupied with running the union rather than campaigning. His campaign seems disorganized, lethargic and overconfident. If Hoffa pulls off an upset win, Carey will not be the only loser. ◀

MEXICO

An opposition coalesces

The political system is cracking from above as opposition parties gain strength, and from below as popular organizations grow more militant.

By Fred Rosen
MEXICO CITY

T

he economic crisis—and its political fallout—is making strange bedfellows in Mexico. In late July, 300 members of El Barzón, the country's militant middle-class debtors' movement, held a two-day national conference in the town of La Realidad, Chiapas, under the "protection" of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). After a day-long internal strategy session, the group met with the Zapatista leadership to discuss future joint actions.

That middle-class farmers—many of them employers of the very people on whose behalf the Zapatistas rose up in arms—would be making such overtures to a guerrilla movement underscores the country's new political situation. To the surprise of many Mexicans, groups are reaching out to one another that only two years ago would have been hopelessly separated by differences of

class, culture and ideology.

El Barzón ("The Harness") was founded in 1993 by a small number of deeply indebted farmers in the western state of Jalisco, in response to the country's skyrocketing interest rates and the banks' imminent repossession of their lands. The farmers called attention to their predicament by blocking highways and city streets with tractors and other farm implements. Currently led by Juan José Quirino, a 35-year-old cattle rancher with leftist sympathies, El Barzón has become a nationwide organization of rural and urban debtors, known for their non-violent, disruptive direct action.

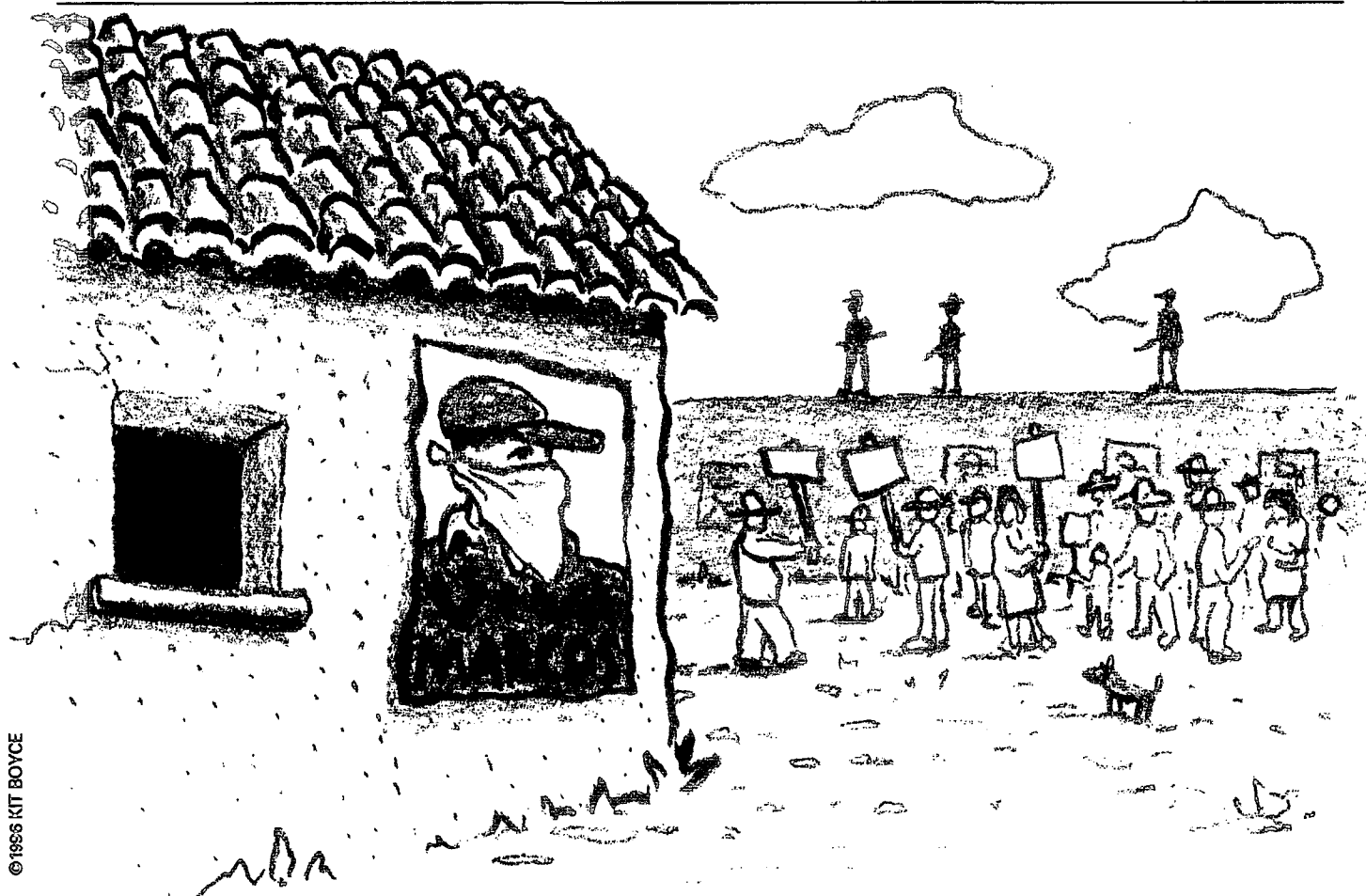
In the closing ceremony of the two-day encounter, Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos asked what it was "that permitted people so different from one another to meet here in La Realidad." And, being Marcos, he answered his own question: "We all know that the principal power responsible has been the government. It has been the government which, through its economic policies, has birthed us, raised us and unified us."

Different sectors of Mexican society have different complaints against the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the official party that has ruled Mexico since 1929. To many Maya of Chiapas, "bad government" means the brutal and corrupt authoritarianism of a non-indigenous elite. To the generally better-off mestizo farmers and a growing number of other Mexicans, brutality and corruption became a pressing issue only when added to the government's current inability to deliver the economic goods.

As Mexico struggles through the 20th month of a period known here simply as "the Crisis," a growing number of Mexicans are blaming the government and its market-oriented economic policies for their poverty. Indebted farmers, archbishops, trade unionists, opposition politicians and indigenous guerrillas now use the word "neoliberalism" almost interchangeably with "bad government."

Until the early 1980s, the Mexican government played an active role in the economy. It protected domestic industry with high tariff and non-tariff barriers to international trade and investment, and it adhered to a policy of "stable development" that attempted to keep prices, interest rates and international exchange rates under control. It also attempted to provide a relatively high degree of social security to Mexican citizens.

In 1983, a year after the Finance Ministry announced a "moratorium" on the country's international debt payments, economic policy took a 180-degree turn. President Miguel de la Madrid, under pressure from the international lending agencies that were helping Mexico make good on its debt, implemented a series of neoliberal economic reforms. Setting a precedent that virtually all of its sister republics in



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Latin America would eventually follow, the Mexican government began to privatize and deregulate the economy, open it to international investment and trade, and cut loose the workforce—especially the peasantry—from its traditional protections and supports.

As part of its reform program, the Mexican government has pushed to integrate into the global economy—most dramatically by way of NAFTA—and has relied on foreign investment as the driving force of economic growth and development. Low production costs (i.e., low wages) have attracted direct investors, and high rates of return (i.e., high interest rates) have brought in stock market investors.

But this new economic course has left many victims in its wake. Declining real wages are impoverishing Mexican workers, while high interest rates are hurting Mexican businesses. And cheap corn imported from Kansas is luring away the huge commercial tortilla makers who used to buy the produce of campesino farmers.

The painful repercussions of the neoliberal model for Mexico's majority became more acute in the aftermath of the December 1994 peso crisis. "Between 1991 and 1993," reports the Bank of Mexico, "foreign portfolio investment was [Mexico's] main source of foreign-capital inflows." These flows bolstered the image of Carlos Salinas' "new Mexico" and paved the way for NAFTA. But portfolio investment is sensitive to perceptions of very short-term

gains and losses. In a lightning-quick loss of confidence, investors reacted to the government's awkward peso devaluation by removing an estimated \$5 billion of foreign (and a good deal of domestic) capital in a matter of days.

That capital flight pulled the rug out from under the Mexican economy. The country's internal market collapsed, credit for small and medium-sized businesses virtually disappeared, formal employment dramatically contracted, and poverty grew at an alarming rate. An estimated 75 percent of Mexican families are now unable to buy the "basic basket" of goods and services considered necessary to keep a family above the official poverty line.

"Things have been declining for 15 years, but now the situation is critical," says Francisco Saucedo, a former federal deputy in the Mexican Congress. "There is no one who doesn't have a close relative who is a victim of this insecurity. It used to be you could find training and work no matter how hard things were. But now someone who might have found a professional position is driving a taxi." And as the number of taxi drivers, street vendors and domestic servants grows, the increased competition makes it harder for any of them to earn a living.

Like any crisis, this one has its political dimensions. Amid multiplying financial scandals, the increasing use of political violence and intimidation to quell dissent, and economic dire straits, the PRI has found itself unable to maintain its

authority and legitimacy. The system is beginning to crack from above as right- and left-wing opposition parties gain strength, and from below as organizations such as El Barzón openly defy authority.

While the economic crisis has seriously undermined the PRI's credibility, many Mexicans first lost faith in the party in the wake of the massive Mexico City earthquake of 1985, in which at least 10,000 people lost their lives. Critics blamed corrupt PRI-affiliated building inspectors for the illegally built structures that crumbled in the quake, and the government proved incapable of mobilizing the resources for reconstruction. The job fell instead to spontaneously organized citizens' groups (many of which remain active, long after the immediate tasks of reconstruction have concluded), church parishes and a mushrooming number of non-governmental organizations, frequently supported from abroad.

Alongside this civic mobilization, an influential "Democratic Current" emerged within the PRI. The faction, led by social democrats Porfirio Muñoz Ledo and Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, split from the party to contest the 1988 presidential elections as a center-left coalition. The dissident *Priistas*, together with a number of small leftist parties, backed Cárdenas for the presidency and formed the organization that later became the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the country's principal party of the left. After an election-night "computer failure" was repaired, PRI candidate Carlos Salinas was declared the victor with just over 50 percent of the vote. Most believe Cárdenas would have won the election if there had been an honest count.

Since the 1988 election, the PRD has lost ground as an opposition vehicle. Because outgoing party leader Muñoz Ledo focused on a "negotiated transition" to democracy from above, many have come to see the party as out of touch with its natural bases of support. Meanwhile, the most powerful forces of the Mexican opposition are bubbling up from below, principally among neighborhood, ethnic and interest groups in what has come to be known here as "civil society." This new civic opposition is showing signs of a tactical—but thus far unideological—radicalization. In mid-July, for example, the national teachers' union held a series of marches in Mexico City in which they clashed with the police. The teachers' demands for better wages and working conditions were not radical at all, but by taking to the streets, they showed a growing militancy and a willingness to distance themselves from the conservative forces of PRI-affiliated unionism.

The same process of tactical radicalization is going on within the PRD itself. Andres Manuel López Obrador, former PRD candidate for governor of the southeastern state of Tabasco, won the open internal election for national party leadership in July. He promised not to move the party to the "center," but instead to crank up the militancy. He has become well known as a party radical not on ideological grounds but because he has championed popular direct

action. Most recently, he and his supporters blocked access to the state-owned oil fields in Tabasco to protest Pemex's environmental despoliation.

López Obrador's vision for the PRD, wrote federal deputy Marcos Rascón in the daily paper *La Jornada*, consists of "creating a movement-party ... unified in the social struggle and the struggle for democracy." The new leadership's public confrontation with the PRI and with neoliberalism, Rascón continued, "has given the party electoral credibility ... which should make it a party of the left, radically anti-neoliberal, nationalist and democratic."

In late June, Marcos and then-candidate López Obrador announced that the EZLN and the PRD would work together to ensure success in the 1997 congressional election. Such cooperation has eluded the two groups so far. From Marcos' point of view, such a partnership should be embedded in a broader alliance of social and political forces. "If we had to choose a political force to which to give our support," said Marcos in his speech to members of El Barzón, "that force would be civil society, a force independent of the political parties, or which, including them ... was greater than the sum of its parts, more generous than the egoism of their leaderships, more inclusive than particular sectarianisms. A force of forces. That would be the political force the EZLN would support."

The EZLN clearly cannot organize such a national force by itself. It tried most recently a few months ago with its declaration of a new Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN), which never got off the ground. Yet if other groups are encouraged to enter an opposition coalition on their own terms, Marcos and the Zapatistas will no doubt play a major role. The get-together with El Barzón was a step in that direction.

While the center-right National Action Party (PAN) and the PRD have recently concluded successful negotiations with the PRI to democratize the political system through a series of constitutional reforms, traditional party politics generates very little enthusiasm right now on the Mexican left. This, more than anything, explains López Obrador's overwhelming victory in the open party election. Many on the left doubt that a traditional social democratic party could do much in the face of the power of transnational capital. The PRD under its original leadership did not allay that skepticism with a coherent set of economic policy proposals.

But many Mexicans still hope that some sort of "force of forces" can generate enough enthusiasm to resist the neoliberal onslaught—or at least keep it from making further inroads. This would buy time for democratic participation to create alternative forms of social and economic development. At the very least, Mexicans hope that popular mobilization can force the government to re-establish some of the forms of social protection that have been lost over the past two decades. ◀

Fred Rosen is editor of *NACLA Report on the Americas*.

B L A C K A M E R I C A

Out of the ashes

“This problem has gone from a mountain to a molehill,” jokes Abraham Kinnard, principal of Boligee’s cash-strapped, all-black Paramount High School, as he inspects volunteer carpenters cutting and re-laying the school gymnasium’s badly buckled wooden floor. Over the last few weeks, Principal Kinnard’s mountain of repair problems has diminished thanks to the efforts of some two dozen mainly white, young volunteers from the North. The gym’s hot, humid air is filled with sawdust and the sounds of buzz saws, hammering, shouts and laughter. Six high school students are perched on scaffolding, painting the gym walls white with a deep blue baseline.

As blacks and whites work together to rebuild burned black churches, they are mending old racial cleavages.

By Martha Honey
BOLIGEE, ALABAMA

The work crew is part of a Quaker-run project to rebuild three black Baptist

churches in rural western Alabama destroyed by arsonists since December. Nearby, the Mennonites are rebuilding a fourth burned Baptist church. Over the last 18 months, some four dozen, mostly rural black churches have been burned in 11 states, including nine in Alabama (see “Burning hate,” July 8). “Since we arrived on June 1, a dozen more churches have been burned nationwide,” says Harold Confer, 55, a Washington, D.C. builder and head of Washington Quaker Workcamps, which is spearheading the reconstruction project. “The president has made it the hot issue of the summer, and thousands of people from around the world have responded.” Volunteers from across the United States and as far away as Tanzania and Yugoslavia have arrived in tiny Boligee (population 300) to participate in the project. In late July, with construction on the churches well ahead of schedule, the Quakers offered their services to the local public school.

“At first I was in disbelief, but it is real,” Kinnard says. “I’d been wondering how to make the repairs before school opens and the answer finally came with our good friends.” The work camp donates labor, expertise and tools, while the school furnishes the supplies and lunch. Each day, more local youngsters have shown up to help with the repairs.

Work teams are also scrubbing, scouring, painting and repairing the toilets and tiles in the school’s bathrooms. “In a sense, this is a recreation of racial relations in America, because for the last 200 years it’s been poor black women who have scrubbed the toilets,” says Phillida Hartley, 44, an Australian volunteer who initiated the school repair project. “Now the toilets in this black school are being scrubbed by American and international white people, who are doing it of their own free will, as a labor of love.”

The summer work camp is shaking up mores in Greene County, the poorest, smallest and, many here say, most segregated county in the state. Greene County is 82 percent black, and—with the exception of Boligee and Eutaw, the county seat—most elected officials are African-Americans. But the civil rights movement of the ’60s appears to have changed little else. “Here we have two of everything,” says Henry Carter, 79, a deacon at Little Zion, one of the burned churches. In practice, if no longer in law, Greene County has black public schools and a private all-white academy; a black newspaper and a white one; a black bank and a white bank; a black public swimming pool, a predominantly white public pool and an all-white private country club; and racially separate funeral homes and cemeteries. Some doctor’s offices still have separate waiting rooms, and at the Boligee Cafe, white visitors are



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Church officials meet with contractors at Little Zion Baptist Church in Boligee.

ushered to tables in the air-conditioned back room, while blacks customarily sit at the counter in the front room. Except for the tiny, 30-member Catholic church, houses of worship in Greene County remain racially divided. "Eleven o'clock Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week," one local official asserted at a recent civic meeting called to discuss the church burnings. Churches have long been both bastions of the racial divide and focal points of the civil rights movement. In 1963, a Sunday morning bomb blast at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham killed four young girls. At the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, across the street from this historic site, art curator Carolyn McKinstry, 47, who was attending Sunday school in the church's basement the day of the blast, remains haunted by the bombing. "When I started hearing about these church burnings, it became very real,"

McKinstry recalls. "It was happening again. It's like the ultimate in evil. Church burnings. Church destruction."

In the summer of 1965, I was working on a civil rights newspaper in Tuskegee, Ala., where black college students were trying to integrate the local white churches. Each Sunday morning ended in bloody mayhem as black worshippers and the press were beaten by angry white parishioners and local toughs. Near the end of the summer, local whites gunned down black student leader Sammy Young.

Thirty years later, in Eutaw, white minister Wayne Fair also paid a price for trying to break racial taboos. For eight years, Fair, a native of Alabama, was minister at Eutaw's First Presbyterian, the town's oldest church. His family lived in the elegant parish house just off the quiet town square and the church paid his children's tuition at the all-white private Warrior Academy. Fair says when he and his wife Pat decided to withdraw their children from the academy because of "its cultural values, its materialism, classism, racism and emphasis on football to the hilt,"

some church elders were “very offended.” Last year when Fair began inviting a few blacks, including one ex-convict, to attend his church, the elders held a secret meeting and unanimously voted to fire him.

Fair moved his family into the all-black Martin Luther King public housing project just outside Eutah to continue, he says, working for “racial reconciliation in Greene County. We’re not here to be paternalistic or prove we’re God’s gift to the black community, but to live out day-to-day life.” Regarding the church burnings, Fair says, “The best thing we can do is show an abundance of concern, that we’re not indifferent.”

No arrests have been made in connection with the four black churches burned in this area. The black and white communities remain deeply divided over what they believe the motives are behind the fires. Most white teachers, reporters, ministers and other community leaders interviewed in Eutah deny race is a factor in the burnings, and many hint that blacks themselves may have been responsible. “Could be by blacks who wanted racial tensions to stay or to divert attention from the community’s political problems or, in two cases, to collect the insurance,” said a minister’s wife who asked to remain anonymous.

Black pastors and politicians are incensed by such remarks. They note that the fires began just after three young white men had been convicted of vandalizing several black churches. A shot was fired into the home of the black circuit judge who sentenced the trio, two of the churches burned on the same night, and in recent months there have been a string of minor racial incidents, says city council member Spiver Gordon, the longtime local leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. “I know who has a history of burning churches. It ain’t black folks. It’s very very troubling and upsetting [that] there’s so much denial in this country about whether race is a factor,” Gordon contends.

The Rev. Levi Pickens, pastor of the burned Mt. Zion Baptist Church (now being rebuilt by the Quakers), told a community forum, “I’ve been hearing that we don’t have a problem in Greene County, but I’ve been living here long enough to know that is wrong. We do have a racial problem.”

Some see the burnings as an organized conspiracy by white supremacist groups. “They are most definitely organized,” says Gus Townes, director of rural training at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, which is housing the volunteers. “The pattern in every church burning is pretty much the same. Whoever’s doing it has been trained.”

Others, however, view them as part of a more generalized rising tide of hatred, fueled by extremist radio talk shows and linked to other crimes, such as the Oklahoma City bombing. John Zippert, editor of the *Greene County Democrat*, which is considered the black newspaper, sees

the burnings as “part of a continuum. I think Reagan set the tone that somehow white people in this country were being discriminated against, and this allowed people who are more extremist the opportunity to do what they want—to blow up buildings, burn down churches and shoot people.” Zippert, a white New Yorker, came south 30 years ago to work in the civil rights movement. “This country has in many ways become more racist in an institutional way, despite all the positive things that have happened in the last generation.”

Arising from the ashes around Boligee are larger, more modern churches as well as a sense of purpose and community that had waned since the civil rights movement. The church burnings were intended “to instill fear, but it’s backfiring,” says Townes. “Instead, the church burnings have provided a much needed spark that is bringing people, both black and white, together so we can begin moving forward again.”

At noon each day, a team of ladies and a cluster of small children arrive at the Little Zion worksite bearing fried chicken, potato salad, corn bread, beans, greens and other fixings. While the 40-odd volunteers and local workers fill their plates, the church women entertain with gospel songs. During one recent week, eight white parishioners from an evangelical church in Kentucky arrived in a camper to join the work party. In the shadow of the nearly completed church, guitarist Terry Barnes sang an Appalachian hymn, “If you think He’s just a carpenter, then look at what He built,” to which the Little Zion women responded with the hand-clapping gospel lyric, “When all God’s children get together, what a time.”

A handful of Alabama whites have joined the reconstruction project, but none from Greene County. Some local white churches have, however, collected funds and sent meals to the worksites, and the Eutah Chamber of Commerce recently hosted a dinner for the volunteers. Only Buddy Lavender, Boligee’s controversial and loose-tongued mayor, has voiced public opposition to the Quaker construction project. “Some of those who have come to rebuild are outside agitators,” says Lavender. “They have caused a lot of friction among the races with what they’re doing.”

On Sundays, the volunteers worship with the tiny congregations from the burned churches at makeshift locations. Charlie Means, 33, a deacon at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, says: “You can’t imagine walking into your Sunday school and seeing 15 blacks and 25 white people, all feeling the same Holy Spirit. I can do nothing but thank God that I’m alive in 1996 to see this happen. Dr. Martin Luther King said many times that he had a dream. But I’m one of the people among the living that is seeing his dream become a reality.”

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I N P R I N T

Crime and punishment

By Karen Robert

The civilian massacres of the early 1990s in places such as Bosnia and Rwanda have prompted renewed questioning worldwide about how to reconstruct a society in the wake of massive human rights abuses. The Yugoslav War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague is presently struggling with such moral and legal questions: How do we define the boundaries of a "war" against civilians? How do we assign responsibility and mete out punishment through the military chain of command? How do we ensure that political compromise does not derail that enactment of justice?

Argentine journalist Horacio Verbitsky's new book, *The Flight*, should be required reading for the architects of reconciliation in Bosnia, South Africa, El Salvador and Rwanda. Verbitsky chronicles the nightmare of impunity that has haunted his country since its political and judicial authorities abandoned the pursuit of truth and justice. The book's title refers to the preferred method of extrajudicial execution during the military dictatorship of 1976 to 1983, when thousands of illegally detained prisoners were drugged and thrown from airplanes into the ocean while still alive. Most remarkably, *The Flight* explores Argentina's dark past through the personal nightmares of one man, Lieutenant Commander Adolfo Francisco Scilingo—a victimizer, not a victim, inside the country's killing machine.

The media attention now focused on the Hague Tribunal was directed 10 years ago at a similar judicial process in Argentina. In 1986, the leaders of that country's "dirty war" received prison sentences for directing a systematic regime of terror that counted between 10,000 and 30,000 victims. Argentina became the first Latin American country to convict top military officials for human rights abuses. Accountability was possible because the disastrous adventure of the Malvinas (Falklands) War had utterly discredited the armed forces. In 1983, the country's new civilian president, Raúl Alfonsín, set a precedent, later followed in Chile and El Salvador, when he established a government truth commission

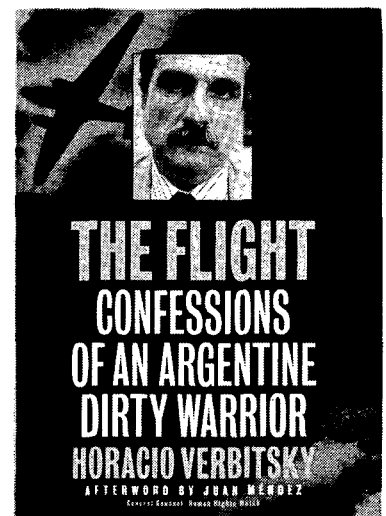
to investigate the dictatorship's human rights abuses.

In its report, entitled *Nunca Más* (Never Again), the National Commission on the Disappeared documented 9,000 cases of kidnapping, torture and extrajudicial execution, and suggested the real number of victims was far higher. When military courts proved unwilling to prosecute the generals, the civilian courts tried them in televised hearings. Survivors of Argentina's clandestine prisons told stories of physical, psychological and sexual abuse, and corroborated the commission's report regarding the death flights. Yet the former junta leaders steadfastly denied all accusations and blamed any "excesses" on the zeal of their subordinates. Nevertheless, by the end of 1986, 14 top military and police officials had received prison sentences and hundreds of charges had been filed.

The *Nunca Más* report and the trials introduced a new word to this century's vocabulary of barbarity: the transitive verb "to disappear." The Argentine armed forces had disappeared their victims, sucking them off the streets and into a nationwide network of secret concentration camps. Human rights groups such as the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo demanded information about their detained family members. Yet as long as military, police and church officials refused to acknowledge the mechanisms of terror or disclose the names of those who had been executed, the so-called "disappeared" remained in a limbo between life and death.

In contrast to the fanfare surrounding the trials, few people outside Argentina know about the backpedaling that undid the 1986 convictions. President Alfonsín himself halted the court proceedings within months. Then, after a series of military uprisings, he passed a law exempting from guilt all those who had committed human rights offenses under orders, and pardoned dozens of imprisoned officers. Alfonsín's successor, Carlos Menem, completed the retreat in 1990 when he pardoned the former junta members and the convicted leaders of the Montonero guerrilla movement. In refusing to force the military to name its victims, Argentina's fledgling democracy became an accomplice to the disappearances.

Adolfo Scilingo had already suffered years of nightmares and insomnia when the generals stepped out of prison. The nightmares dated from the late 1970s, when he participated in



The Flight: Confessions of an Argentine Dirty Warrior
By Horacio Verbitsky
The New Press
207 pp., \$22

the murder of 30 political prisoners on two navy flights. Menem's pardon in 1990 stirred Scilingo's monsters. He began searching for answers to the questions the Argentine courts had avoided asking: Was he guilty of an aberrant crime for obeying the orders of his superiors? If not, why didn't these superiors identify the dirty war's casualties and the circumstances of their deaths? Was it true what the Mothers said—that the “war” in which he had participated was really a massacre?

In one of many sick ironies, Scilingo practically retraced the Mothers' steps, petitioning the church, military and judiciary for answers. Like the Mothers, he encountered stony silence. He finally chose as his confessor Horacio Verbitsky, Argentina's premier investigative journalist and one of a handful of intellectuals who continue to denounce the military's impunity. Scilingo, in effect, turned to his greatest enemy. Verbitsky represented his last hope for answers—and perhaps even judgment.

The resulting interview fills the first third of Verbitsky's extraordinary book. It is less a confession than a Dostoyevskyan dialogue—between a man who has obsessively catalogued the truth of Argentina's horror for two decades and one who has carried that horror through an increasingly lonely and pathetic life. Yet the two men do not share the same truth. For Scilingo, the great injustice lies not in the executions but in the silence of his superiors. Their secrecy violates his sense of military honor, which he clutches as the last shred of his identity. He repeats the standard justification for the brutality of the '70s, claiming that the military was unprepared for a war against “subversion.” He apparently forgets that in 1976 Argentina's armed forces had not fought anyone but their own population in over a century. More to the point, the silence of the generals leaves Scilingo in the same limbo as his victims. “The term ‘disappeared,’ ” he tells Verbitsky, “is unacceptable to me, and on top of that it falls on my shoulders. Because I didn't make anyone disappear.”

Even in his confession, Scilingo the executioner trips over the dictatorship's web of lies and euphemisms. “The whole navy was involved in the fight against the subversives, or in the—now I don't know what it was.” He presses his interviewer for a reaction: “You're very close-mouthed. You don't tell me what you think.” Later he admits, “These are things that cause me so much doubt that I don't know who is right, you or me.” Though he resists Verbitsky's opinions, he considers them patiently and continues the discussion.

Verbitsky maintains a deadpan tone throughout the encounter, though he does not hesitate to deliver the judgment Scilingo needs. After the interview, he marshals years of research to prove Scilingo's main assertion—that the flights were not “aberrations,” but a deliberate strategy of terror that originated in the chain of command. Verbitsky also meticulously dismantles the edifice of silence that Argentine authorities and opinion-makers have built to erase the memory of the disappeared.

Verbitsky writes in a spare journalistic style, but with the narrative skills of a novelist. After the suffocating atmos-

phere of Scilingo's confession and his own densely constructed argument, he offers the reader a kind of respite in the book's closing section, aptly titled “Catharsis.” If this book were a novel, these last revelations from Scilingo and their sense of vague hope might seem contrived. Because they are fact, not fiction, they are the book's most moving pages.

The English edition of *The Flight* provides a thorough chronology of the Argentine military's political role through this century. An afterword by Juan E. Méndez, general counsel of Human Rights Watch, sets Argentina's struggle with reconciliation in a global context. Méndez argues cogently from the Argentine case that so-called “truth commissions” cannot replace the workings of justice.

The U.S. edition also contains a telling chapter about the book's impact in Argentina. Military officials and President Menem quickly attacked Scilingo when his testimony came to light. They called him a crackpot and a petty criminal, as though these epithets surpassed the title of executioner. Yet the book also prompted a far healthier debate, even in conservative publications that had never acknowledged the country's ugly past. Verbitsky explains the significance of Scilingo's confession, and by extension the cautionary lesson of the Argentine case:

Scilingo said nothing that was not already known, but the words of an executioner admitting to his crimes in the first person had an extraordinary impact, as if the exhibition of Scilingo's tormented soul were necessary to put an end to the two different versions of Argentine history in circulation, so that the narrative of the victims would cease to be that of pariahs and madmen and become the common sense of society.

Scilingo's story transformed public morale in Argentina. A news event in August 1995, five months after the Spanish publication of *The Flight*, attested to the shift. In the ski resort of Bariloche, an unidentified survivor of disappearance spotted his torturer, the notorious Commander Alfredo Astiz, standing exposed on a street corner. Astiz had been a colleague of Scilingo's. The 1986 amnesty decrees had spared him from multiple torture and murder charges in the human rights hearings, though a French court convicted him in absentia for the murder of two French nuns.

On that August day at the height of Bariloche's ski season, Astiz's former victim approached his victimizer, verified his identity, and punched him in the face. The former victim immediately fled to the offices of the nearest human rights organization to register his action and defend himself against reprisal. It was an understated attack given the magnitude of his adversary's crimes. Yet to many Argentines, it was a stunning act of courage and defiance—the first time in 12 years of democracy that anyone had dared to touch one of the dirty warriors. Just as stunning was Astiz's reaction. Rather than denounce his attacker, he quietly fled Bariloche on the first available flight.

Karen Robert is currently completing a doctoral thesis in Argentine history at the University of Michigan.

A modern globetrotter

By Sandy Zipp

"How was it we were caught?" This question echoes as a refrain through the "A Country Letter" section of James Agee and Walker Evans' 1939 masterpiece, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Agee asks it again and again, in different configurations, as he sits alone in the darkness of an early morning in 1936 in an Alabama sharecropper's shack. Indeed, the question comes to occupy a central place in Agee's beautiful mess of social reportage, poetry, meditation and confession.

Sent by *Fortune* magazine to document the plight of landless farmers in the Depression-era South, Agee realizes he is inextricably linked with these people whom he can never fully know. He's trapped by the legacy of Northern industrial capitalism—a system staggered by the Depression, but still holding the South in its faltering sway. The freedom Agee enjoys as a paid representative of that system is a measure of his new friends' entrapment in poverty and historical irrelevance.

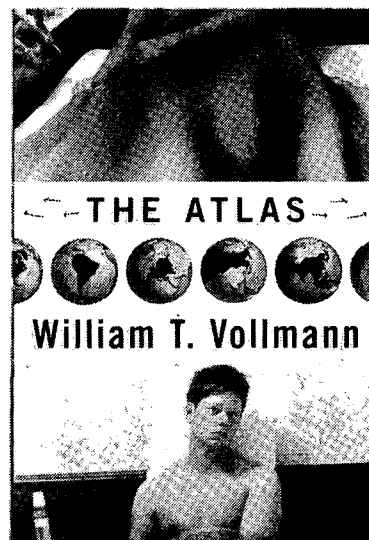
Neither "A Country Letter" nor any of the other writing that later became *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* ever appeared in *Fortune*. Agee was unable to bring himself to "pry intimately into the lives of an undefended and appallingly damaged group of human beings ... in the name of science, of honest journalism (whatever that paradox may mean)." The magazine's editors declined to print his dispatches anyway, perhaps sensing that, as Agee wrote later, he counted his employers at *Fortune* among the sharecroppers' "most dangerous enemies."

Agee's refrain has a modern parallel in William T. Vollmann's latest volume of imaginative reportage, *The Atlas*. Like Agee, Vollmann writes to resolve the contradictions between the world of his imagination and the world he has traveled to observe. He is fascinated with people as much unlike himself as the world can offer. Like *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, the stories in *The Atlas* record the author's encounters with human histories beyond his grasp. But Agee plunged into the emotional and political landscape of the South, while Vollmann is a restless traveler bringing back a sprawl of events, stories and dreams linked only in loose thematic geography.

The Atlas opens in New York's Grand Central Station. Vollmann (or the authorial "I"—it's never clear whether his pronouns represent real characters or merely convenient places from which to survey the world) is watching travelers coursing through the station's bowels. They dive into its tunnels, up and down the escalators, "from the rim of everywhere to be ejaculated everywhere," a swarm of movement that is not "for anything but itself." Vollmann, too, goes off into the rest of the book "obeying the same law that dispersed the others." *The Atlas* consists of 52 vignettes—each told from a specific geographic locale or locales—arranged palindromically so that the first story echoes the last, the second, the second to last, and so on. All are splayed around a centerpiece called "The Atlas," in which sights seen from a train window occasion a flood of memories unleashed like an errant roman candle spitting stories out in all directions. In contrast to Agee's immersion in place, *The Atlas*' very form, dedicated as it is to "worshipping the mystery called motion," reflects Vollmann's fascination with the flow of places.

Vollmann, too, has financed many of his travels as a hired pen. He has written widely from various war zones and exotic locales in recent years. Much of his best work has appeared in *Spin* and *Esquire*. These magazines—one the leading mouthpiece for corporate "alternative" rock and a tribune of pseudo-countercultural bluster, the other a men's lifestyle magazine brimming with celebrity profiles and aestheticized politics—are wholly dedicated to the sort of "human interest" palliatives that *Fortune* doled out in Agee's time as foils for its economic boosterism.

But 60 years later, Vollmann has struck a deal with a more devious devil. In the schizophrenic cultural terrain of today's "entertainment state," the magazines for which he writes can vouchsafe their correspondent whatever liberties he cares to take—without posing any threat to their commercial interests. Following free-market globalization to the ends of the earth, Vollmann collects little bits of the human wreckage left in its wake: wartime lovers in Bosnia, prostitutes in San Francisco, Bangkok and Nairobi, eskimos in the Northwest Territories, Aborigines in Sydney, rich whites cowering in the hills as Los Angeles burns. But what do these sketches reveal about how to explore the



The Atlas
By William T. Vollmann
Viking
459 pp., \$29.95

world and its peoples, even as it falls to pieces around us?

Vollmann and Agee are fascinated by the people they find in the places they go, people who invariably serve as mirrors for themselves. Agee blathers on about removing himself from the book, wishing that it could be comprised only of Walker Evans' photographs—stark, posed actuality—and “fragments of cloth, bits of cotton, lumps of earth, records of speech, pieces of wood and iron, phials of odors, plates of food and excrement.” The more he goes on, however, the more Agee himself becomes the subject of the book. His sympathy for the sharecroppers becomes patronizing and distant, to the point where he seems to regard them as noble ignoramuses, incapable of the deceit and meanness he himself confesses. Nevertheless, Agee's distress evolves into a desperate concern for the South and an effort to root himself in his hosts' struggles.

In *The Atlas*, Vollmann dispenses with the possibility of objectively observing foreign worlds; his vignettes are about himself. They are a “piecemeal atlas of the world I think in,” he says in the promotional material for the book. With his flat gaze and tone, Vollmann almost never presumes to speak for the people he encounters, revealing only the intricacies of his own imagination. In fact, he seems almost an unwilling prisoner of the recent intellectual drift into postmodernism. Even as he forsakes the authority to define a foreign world, he uses that world as fodder for fantasies of a decaying globe held together only in his sentimental imagination.

Never one to half-step when it comes to matters of the heart, Vollmann wants to “know and love the entire atlas.” He says he tries to avoid the conundrum of a traveler who “wanted to possess the alien; his only flaw was that he was unwilling to be possessed by it.” Much of his previous work is marked by a prolonged immersion in the lives of people unlike himself. Vollmann often eschews politics and causes for personal connections—making a war zone like Bosnia into a stage for a crumbling love affair. But such obsessions are at once *The Atlas*' main attraction and its primary liability. Vollmann's roving eye invariably fixes upon one of his exotic staples—the sorrowful yet savvy prostitute, to whom he invariably professes his love. But these women have no

names and barely any character: They float there, material for his fantasies, and then disappear, to be replaced with a new true love somewhere else. Worse than this cloying sexual tourism is “Just Like Animals,” a vignette in which Vollmann remarks that his Thai mountain guides, who accompany him on a long trek into Burma, possess the endurance and “nobility of the animals.” But then, standing Agee on his head, Voll-

mann muses that perhaps “the soul is not a birthright” in “abodes of poverty.”

The Atlas may be an elegy for lost meaning in a tragically broken world, but the reader is often left wondering about Vollmann's complicity in the global commercial relations that are eroding the local fiber of his subjects' lives. Of course, as a good novelist, he reminds us that the tentacles of commerce also bring unexpected freedoms and pleasures. But resting as lightly as we do in the velvet palm of capitalism's iron glove, it's easy to forget that these attractions often amount to so many beads, smallpox blankets and bottles of whiskey in a modern war for economic control of territory. Given Vollmann's scattered itinerary and his reluctance to assert any interpretive authority, meaning in *The Atlas* coalesces only in disparate sites for fleeting moments—and even then it manifests itself

only in his imagination. Whether or not his sentimentality is a failure of feeling, it attests to the absence of a clear-cut struggle against the economic domination that Agee felt so acutely that early Alabama morning.

The Atlas is filled with strange and wonderful characters who deny characterization and with places that slip into placelessness as readily as the scene shifts. Finally, this “mystery called motion” seems an all-too apt metaphor for our time. *The Atlas* does not simply document the destruction of one place, the way Agee grieved as the Industrial Revolution wrenched the South into the 20th century; rather, it serves as a primer for how to live in a global economy that replaces the particular with a false universal, and flattens the local under one interconnected commercial gaze. Vollmann's brand of sentimental tourism gives the reader just the right maudlin “structure of feeling” needed to become comfortably “caught” in the mysterious flow of multinational capital. ◀



Getting the right's roots right

By David Chappell

Which is worse? The bigot who deeply and sincerely feels his bigotry, or the opportunist who affects bigotry to advance his political career? The answer is the true bigot, surely, for he is beyond compromise, and when political circumstances no longer reward bigotry above all else, he will still work to keep bigotry alive. Then again, maybe it is the opportunist, because on top of encouraging hatred and violence, he is lying. Unlike the sincere bigot, generally, he profits from bigotry and in doing so shows others how to profit from it. That may do more to keep bigotry alive than the true believers ever can.

The career of George Wallace, the most brilliant and most successful segregationist of the 1960s, raises a further possibility: What about the opportunist who converts to the cause? Beginning his political career as a racial moderate, Wallace lost his first gubernatorial contest (in 1958) to John Patterson, whose fire-eating Negrophobia scared white voters away from Wallace's moderation. In defeat, Wallace vowed that "no other son of a bitch will ever out-nigger me again." From 1958 on, he had to exaggerate his expressions of bigotry outrageously to convince his followers he meant what he said. In the process, Wallace seems to have convinced himself.

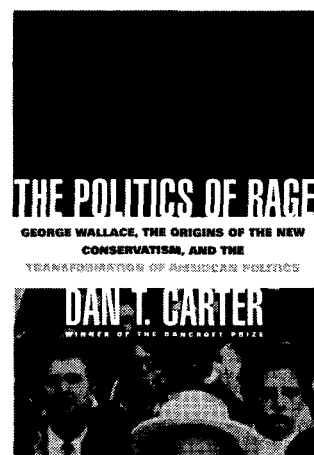
Unlike Patterson and all the other racial demagogues, Wallace's power extended beyond his region—the only Southerners who had more national influence in his day were Lyndon Johnson and Martin Luther King. And, Dan Carter suggests in his engrossing and well-researched biography, Wallace's influence was more lasting. Wallace was the first to distill and prove the effectiveness of the formula that killed Great Society liberalism and gave birth to the political culture of our own time: "More than any other political leader of his generation," Carter says, Wallace "was the alchemist of the new social conservatism as he compounded racial fear, anticommunism, racial nostalgia and traditional right-wing economics into a movement that

laid the foundation for the conservative counterrevolution that reshaped American politics in the 1970s and 1980s."

Carter overemphasizes one of the elements in Wallace's formula. Right-wing economics was not a big issue for him—not nearly as big as it was for, say, Barry Goldwater. Carter describes Wallace as *the* proto-Reaganite of the 1960s, but that title is perhaps better suited to Goldwater or Richard Nixon. The devotion of blue-collar voters in the 1980s to Ronald Reagan, the flagrant champion of the rich, remains somewhat difficult to explain, but their devotion to Wallace makes sense—Wallace earned their support with a true populist record. In Alabama, he supported taxes on corporations and opposed the regressive sales tax while expanding the state budget with huge public works and education programs. And, though Big Labor's political action committee suppressed the fact in the 1968 presidential campaign, Wallace opposed state "right-to-work" laws, the major strategic device of the post-New Deal reaction against labor. Half of Wallace supporters in the North in 1968 named Hubert Humphrey—the candidate of the unions and the welfare-statists—not Nixon, as their second choice.

Carter rightly emphasizes that as Wallace became a national figure, his views on economic issues shifted rightward. But that is true of both major parties, and of the blue-collar voters who were the chief prize in the contest between them. Wallace brought a lot of angry white people into political prominence and kindled their resentment of their liberal Democratic rulers, but he cannot get the credit for converting them to right-wing economics.

If anybody can get credit for that, it would be the many Republicans who suggested that tax hikes pay for welfare, and that welfare mainly benefits fashionable minority groups—and, therefore, assuages the guilt of rich white liberals on the cheap as they flee the crime-ridden cities in which blue-collar workers are trapped. Wallace did develop that plausible mixture of lies and truths to some extent. But the key to its lasting power was affirmative action, which explicitly stated that minority groups should benefit at the expense of white men—most of them, as it turned out, working-class white men. Ironically, it was not a liberal president, but the Nixon administration that



The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics
By Dan T. Carter
Simon & Schuster
572 pp., \$30

created the “set-asides” of government contracts for “minority-owned” businesses and required contractors to adopt “goals and timetables” for hiring minority workers. In a brilliant political stroke, the latter program aimed to make unions, and not just capitalists, abandon seniority and other traditional promotion systems. While Wallace capitalized on popular resentment of affirmative action, it was Nixon who forced white workers to choose for the first time between black “civil rights” and their own rights. From this, it was a small step to believing the Republican promise that cuts in domestic spending would reduce the worker’s tax burden and force the jobless (who were disproportionately black) to find jobs. Meanwhile, Democrats had to defend Nixon’s affirmative action policies or risk losing the black vote.

The best evidence Carter presents that Wallace is the true key to the rise of the right ironically reduces him to a secondary role. He shows that Nixon’s greatest fear all through his first term was Wallace. In the South, where Nixon most needed votes for his re-election bid in 1972, Wallace’s supporters overwhelmingly named Nixon as their second choice. Nixon had to move far enough to the right on racial issues to overcome the segregationists’ skepticism. Carter points to various documents that suggest Nixon canceled school busing orders, nominated segregationists (unsuccessfully) to the Supreme Court, and abandoned his surprisingly redistributive Family Assistance Plan solely to win votes away from Wallace. Nixon won the votes, but Wallace “was playing him like a marionette,” Carter says. Competition from Wallace led Nixon to undo many of the gains made by the civil rights movement, thereby legitimizing Wallace’s extremism. So Wallace became, in Carter’s words, “the most influential loser in twentieth-century American politics.”

While Wallace undoubtedly had a profound influence on the end of postwar liberalism—far more influence than historians have given him credit for—there are important differences between Wallace’s ideology and that of contemporary right-wing ideologues such as Newt Gingrich and Ralph Reed.

The gap between Southern segregationism and the later, more successful conservative movement is revealed in one of the most remarkable Wallace statements Carter quotes: “Law and order is a communist term.” Wallace made this remark to white moderates who suggested that resistance to the Supreme Court was futile and that negotiating with black demonstrators was the best way to get them out of the streets. “Every time the communists take over, they clamp down with law and order,” he insisted. It infuriated Wallace that “law and order” was a slogan of the civil rights movement because it provided an apple-pie issue behind which fair-weather segregationists could hide as they gave up the fight. Wallace’s defining issue was segregation: He was willing to sacrifice law and order for it. But “law and order,” of course, became Nixon’s defining issue—his battle cry against hippies, protesters and the

dangerous criminals set free by the Warren Court. Today, those who seek to curb defendants’ rights and fight crime through police liberation are Nixon’s heirs, not Wallace’s.

Whatever the current right’s outrages, it does not win elections through racial demagoguery. Gingrich and his followers may harbor deep racist impulses—though there is no evidence that they harbor any more than liberals do—but, in stark contrast to Wallace, they keep their public statements scrupulously free of racist themes. Ironically, Wallace was far better at getting the black vote than today’s right has been. After he survived an assassination attempt in 1972 that left him paralyzed, he renounced racism and begged black people’s forgiveness. He got 30 percent of the black vote in Alabama’s gubernatorial primary of 1974 and had strong black support ever after.

The clearest difference between the right-wing groundswell of the 1980s and the earlier, less successful segregationist movement is in the role of the church. Today’s Republican majority in Congress and the disappearance of liberal Republicanism, both unimaginable 30 years ago, cannot be explained without the recent grassroots mobilization of conservative Christian masses. Had segregationists been able to mobilize their churches, they might have managed to defeat civil rights. But they could not. Following the Supreme Court’s desegregation decision of 1954, the assemblies of all major denominations of the white Southern church passed resolutions in favor of compliance with the law. After Wallace assumed leadership of the segregation movement in 1962, white preachers and congregations all over Alabama bombarded him with pleas to drop his belligerent rhetoric and comply with the new “law of the land.” Only a handful of preachers on the fringes of the Southern church actively defended segregation, and they fiercely attacked the white Southern church as a whole for its “moderation.”

Wallace had never been terribly religious, so his falling out with the mainstream Southern church did not hurt him as much as it hurt many segregationists. Interestingly, when Wallace renounced racism, he also got religion, and at that moment he began to resemble today’s right. But Carter does not make that connection: To him, it is the Wallace of 1958-1972, the unforgiving and unforgiven segregationist, who prefigured today’s formidable right wing.

Most original books overstate their case—they have to, or the significance of their argument is easily missed. At any rate, it is hard to imagine a book about Wallace—who became famous only because he could exaggerate so well—without some overstatement in it. Carter carefully corrects Wallace’s own exaggerations, and provides new evidence and insights that will lead to a better understanding, or at least a fuller debate, of exactly how the upheavals of the 1960s created the mess we are in today. ◀

David Chappell is the author of *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement* (Johns Hopkins). He is now writing a book about religion and politics in the post-World War II South.

The gulag society

By J.W. Mason

When future epochs look back at late 20th-century America, perhaps nothing will shock them as much as our hypertrophied prison system. Today's criminal justice empire—with 1.5 million people under its immediate rule in prison, and millions more on probation and parole in its shadow—is a virtual state within a state. Here no democratic norms are upheld, no personal rights are respected, living conditions—often a 20 foot by 20 foot steel cell with two cots and an exposed toilet, for two adult men—can be unbelievably harsh, and the slightest infraction of the rules is met with immediate and often violent retaliation.

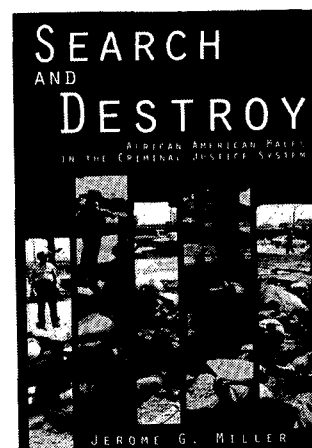
This massive prison complex never really had much to do with controlling crime: In the last 15 years, the U.S. prison population has quadrupled, even though crime rates have remained close to constant. Increasingly, even apologists for the current criminal justice system are abandoning the pretense that it has any effect on crime, turning instead to recrudescing biological theories of criminality to justify filling the prisons with those deemed inferior.

Debate about the criminal justice system is distinguished, on almost every side, by a complete lack of firsthand knowledge or experience. How many of the politicians who set policy on crime, or the academics and journalists who write about it, have ever worked in the prison system, or have a friend or relative who served time in a prison? What makes Jerome Miller's book *Search and Destroy* such a useful and interesting contribution to discussions of crime is that he has spent his whole career in the prison system. He has worked as administrator of the juvenile detention systems in two states, as a court-appointed jail monitor, as head of the National Center for Institutions and Alternatives (which recommends alternative sentences to judges inclined to impose them), and most recently as head of the District of Columbia's child welfare services. Few people have such broad and detailed inside knowledge of our prison system, accumulated over so many years; no one has painted as devastating a

portrait of how it works or offered as ominous a prognosis for its future. As a practical matter, says Miller, incarceration has little to do with crime control and everything to do with filling up prisons as a goal in itself.

Over the last two decades, the proportion of arrests made for violent and property crimes has fallen, while the proportion for drug and minor crimes has risen sharply. In the vast majority of violent crime cases, moreover, defendants are charged with "aggravated assault," an amorphous category that is distinguished from "simple assault" (a misdemeanor) as much by the whim of the police officer or prosecutor as by any formally established criteria. Tellingly, in 68 percent of all "violent" crimes, there is no injury of any kind to the victim. In the majority of the 400,000 annual arrests for aggravated assault nationwide, the prosecutor declines to proceed or the charges are dismissed by the courts; in most of the remainder, the charge is reduced to a misdemeanor—a sure sign of routine overcharging by police anxious to exaggerate the severity of violent crime. With an essentially infinite number of behaviors potentially classifiable as criminal (by legal definition, an assault, for instance, can be any action that makes someone feel physically threatened) and a public mood that sanctions virtually any "anti-crime" measure, no matter how extreme, the number of those arrested and jailed depends not on crime levels but on how many occupants the relevant authorities think their jails and prisons should have. Even the harshest punishment for the most minor offense can be justified by the need to "maintain respect for the system."

The reach of the police process is frightening. As of 1990, local law enforcement authorities kept more than 50 million criminal histories on file. Another 4 to 5 million adults get criminal records every year. In other words, at least one in five Americans is officially a criminal. (So much for separating out the bad guys!) And then there are the gang membership databases increasingly popular with police in large metropolitan areas. In Chicago, a typical example, police officers can enter a teenager's name into the "GRIPS" database of suspected gang members if they see him on a street corner talking with other suspected gang members; this listing can then be used as evidence in a trial. This sort of iterative guilt by association can be tremendously effective in piling up "suspects": In a similar



Search and Destroy:
African-American Males in
the Criminal Justice System
By Jerome G. Miller
Cambridge University Press
344 pp., \$24.95

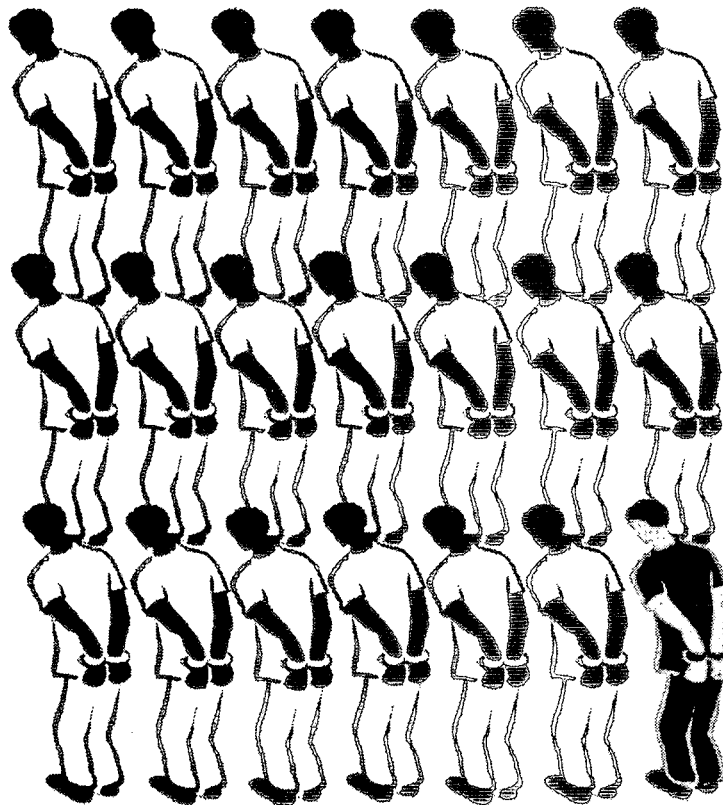
database, Denver police have listed more than two-thirds of the city's black males between the ages of 12 and 24 as "suspected gang members."

Meanwhile, the adversarial, punitive aspects of the criminal justice system have overwhelmed earlier attempts, never very far-reaching, at rehabilitation—that is, at treating the "criminal" as a human being and a member of society who can potentially amend his ways. Last year, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a crime bill that calls for "standards regarding conditions in the federal prison system that provide prisoners with the least amount of amenities and personal comforts consistent with good order and discipline." Massachusetts Gov. William Weld declared "that prison should be like a tour through the circles of hell." Evidently on the same wavelength, Graeme Newman, dean of the criminal justice department at SUNY-Albany, publicly wondered whether prisoners should "be subjected to the same terrible tortures in prison that Dante dreamed up for Hell or Purgatory," or at least to "risky medical research."

This shift toward the punitive is particularly obvious in those areas of the criminal justice system that were originally supposed to be less adversarial: the juvenile courts, and probation and parole. It's not surprising that conservative "reformers" of the criminal justice system (including, in this context, President Clinton) have sought to transfer jurisdiction of certain classes of juvenile offenders to adult courts, despite the small number of individuals this would actually affect. The law's distinction between juvenile and adult has always been based on the idea that young offenders can still become productive citizens. That's why juvenile courts traditionally lack the adversarial accoutrements of the court room, such as prosecutors and defenders, and emphasize a narrative, individual understanding of the offender rather than just the "facts" of the crime. The juvenile courts have long since disappointed their early promise—in the '40s, Harvard law professor Roscoe Pound compared the founding of the juvenile court to the signing of the Magna Carta as an advance in Western jurisprudence. They largely mirror the summary injustice of the adult courts, with the added slap in the face

to defendants that their punishment is "for their own good." But the conservatives still have reason to hate them: The notion that the offender is a member, not an enemy, of society still underlies much juvenile court practice, and, in Miller's words, "there is always the remote possibility that, phoenix-like, it might one day rise from the ashes and overwhelm us all with reason and decency."

Probation and parole officers, for their part, have largely shifted from advocates whose task was to help the offender stay out of prison, to armed pseudo-police officers whose task is to get him back in. The modern parole officer, for instance, does not provide the parolee with any assistance in finding a job, but he does have the power to return him to prison for failing to find one—or for missing appointments or Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, moving or marrying without permission, or a host of other behaviors that are in no way criminal. The goal, often explicitly stated, is to make parole as intensive and demanding as possible so as to return the maximum number of parolees to prison. The same goes for probation. "The goal of community protection is not always compatible with rehabilitation," Los Angeles' chief probation officer explained to Miller. "Why is revocation and sentencing of a probation violator not considered a 'success'? I believe it should be, and that is why the goals of the



[probation system] here in Los Angeles placed [preventing] recidivism as a lower priority."

When probation or other "alternative" sentences are imposed in lieu of prison, the apparent effort at moderation is often vitiated by absurd overkill of restriction and monitoring. Miller cites the case of a 72-year-old man sentenced to a year of home detention, enforced by an electronic ankle bracelet, for "driving under the influence" on his moped; the man was put under 24-hour house arrest despite living alone. Probation and parole officers have lost interest in alternative sentences: A 1994 survey of law enforcement professionals—police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, judges—found that probation and parole officers were the least likely to want alternatives to incarceration implemented in their jurisdictions. Between the mid-'70s and the mid-'90s, the

proportion of all prison admissions in California accounted for by technical violations of probation or parole rose from 14 percent to one-third. The motto mounted on the wall of a California chief probation officer expressed the new philosophy succinctly: "Trail 'em, Surveil 'em, Nail 'em, and Jail 'em."

At what point does a more or less racially biased crime control system become a system of racial subjugation that may also perform some crime control functions? As imprisonment rates for blacks and whites inexorably diverge, this question will only become more insistent. By 1993, African-Americans, who make up about 14 percent of the country's population, were a majority of those entering its prisons; only 27 percent of those admitted to prisons that year were white. The proportion of black men in prison—about 6 percent—is approximately 20 times the corresponding rate for white men. At any given moment, about 25 percent of African-Americans between 20 and 29 are imprisoned or on probation or parole. In some big cities, the numbers are much higher. In Baltimore, for instance, 56 percent of black men are in prison or jail, out on bail, on probation or parole, or being sought on an arrest warrant. At least 90 percent of black men can expect to be arrested and jailed for a non-traffic offense at some point in their lives.

Well, but isn't it true that—as one judge said to Miller when he raised this issue with him—blacks are "the ones committing the violent crimes"? It is undeniable that the black murder rate is extremely high, while murder rates for American whites are comparable to those in other First World countries. But murderers make up an infinitesimal proportion of those going to prison, and, in general, the phenomenal increase in the prison population cannot be explained by any increase in violent crime. There is little evidence of major racial disparities among perpetrators of the types of crime more directly tied to the increase in the prison population. Blacks, for instance, are arrested and jailed at far greater rates than whites for drug crimes. In New York, more than 90 percent of those sentenced to prison for drug possession are black or Hispanic. But according to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, whites are in fact slightly more likely to be drug users than blacks.

If black men go to prison at 20 times the rate white men do, there are only two possible explanations: wholesale black criminality, or wholesale racism in the criminal justice system. If the latter by its nature is not as easy to document as we might like, spurious documentation of the former is abundant. The burgeoning of bogus racial science in recent years, epitomized by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve*, is the flip side of racial polarization in the criminal justice system. As police, prosecutors and other local officials pack their prisons in an effort to satisfy the public mood and advance their careers, they naturally find themselves targeting blacks,

immigrants, the poor and other groups unlikely to be in a position to make much of a fuss. As prisoners become darker-hued, racial and other biological theories of criminality become more attractive. And as these theories are elaborated and publicized, it becomes easier to allow racial principles to guide police and prison policies.

In a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Brookings Institution Senior Fellow John DiIulio warned that the nation faces a "growing threat of juvenile super-predators who murder without remorse or fear," who have grown up "fatherless, Godless, and surrounded by deviant, delinquent, and criminal adults." C. Ray Jeffrey, head of the American Society of Criminologists, heralded the link between criminal behavior and genetically determined low IQ as the dawn of a new era of "biosocial criminology," while Richard Herrnstein and James Q. Wilson's well-received 1985 book, *Crime and Human Nature*, popularized the idea that the genetic basis of crime rendered useless any crime prevention strategy other than locking up the born criminals. Daniel Seligman's recent *A Question of Intelligence*, which anticipated *The Bell Curve* in making an explicit link between presumed inborn differences in IQ and race, received glowing reviews in mainstream business magazines such as *Forbes*. James Q. Wilson most bluntly expressed the moral of all this genetic theorizing: "There are one million people in prison. We are not going to change them. We have boys on the streets; we can't change them." Not too long ago, the *National Review* ran a cover story that argued that "America doesn't have a crime problem; it has a black crime problem." By strenuously refusing to consider the "root causes" of crime, these theorists are really just promoting their own preferred root cause: the existence of black people.

As race becomes the guiding principle of our prison system, a certain terrifying logic presents itself. If millions of people are incorrigible criminals, and if the source of their criminality can be located in their genes, then why bother with the formalities of courts and trials to determine their guilt or innocence? Since these individuals are genetically predestined to lives of crime, why not lock them up preemptively? Or indeed, since they can only be burdens to society, and since they have no feelings, remorse, families, religion, response to behavioral conditioning, or any other recognizably human traits, why not simply dispose of them? In his conclusion, Miller warns that U.S. crime policy is laying the foundations of a "gulag society." "It will have played out," he writes, "as a variation of the theme for crime control advanced by E.A. Hooton, an American physical anthropologist of the '30s resurrected by Wilson and Herrnstein. As Hooton put it: 'The elimination of crime can be effected only by the extirpation of the physically, mentally, and morally unfit, or by their complete segregation in a socially aseptic environment.'"

When the trains begin to roll, no one can say we weren't warned.

J.W. Mason is a researcher at the *Left Business Observer*.

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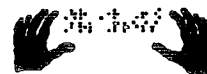
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Continued from page 40

All workers, that is, except cops. The Sparts view the police and the Klan as a single, seamless apparatus of repression, a collusion made plain for all to see as the cops set up barricades to cordon off the Klan's area. The Spart with the megaphone starts chanting: "Cops and Klan go hand in hand!" One demonstrator bitterly recalls a stop-the-Klan rally in Los Angeles where "the cops were waiting for us with snipers." I nervously scan the surrounding skyscrapers for rooftop silhouettes.

Suddenly, the crowd is electrified by the news that the Klan has finally arrived. Fifteen or so Klansmen (with a few Klanswomen among them) pile out of their vans at a far corner of the plaza and advance in a line toward the square. Gone are the hoods and robes of yesteryear; in their place are neat uniforms of black slacks, white shirts and nondescript shoulder insignia. This folk-dress of the law-enforcement caste is apparently the Klan's attempt to express its solidarity with Chicago's beefy guardians of law and order.

I had expected some sort of genteel civil disobedience maneuver, a locking of arms and blocking of paths. Instead, the Sparts—black and white, young and old, men and women—simply *attack* the Klan. As I trail along in the wake of the charge, I can see the Klansmen's eyes widen as the Sparts bear down on them. Heavily outnumbered, the Klan gets the worst of it as they are shoved to the ground and whacked over the head with Spart placards. The police wade in. Chicago cops need no such L.A. affectations as SWAT teams when it comes to crowd control; a few minutes of bare knuckles and billy clubs and the brawl is over. The cops shepherd the Klansmen to their stage behind the Picasso sculpture and haul a few of their attackers off to the paddy wagons. The Sparts raise a perfunctory chant of "Free them! Free them!"

The Klan rally itself is a listless affair. The Klansmen stand silently at attention with their vaguely Nazi-styled flags while their PA system blares a medley of bagpipe music and what sounds like old *Wehrmacht* marching songs. Their only placard is a large sign referring onlookers to a P.O. box in Arizona. Bored by the Klan, many of the Sparts rail at the cops instead, and importune the minorities among them to come over to the Spart side. The cops smile and shake their heads.

After an hour, a Klan spokesman named Tom steps up to the microphone. By now, the anti-Klan crowd has tripled in size, drawing in passersby, purple-haired punks, gay activists and one rival Trotskyist faction, whom the Sparts denounce for missing the earlier melee. Despite the Klan's powerful sound system, the counter-demonstrators nearly drown out Tom's speech. From what I can make out, the Klan, which Tom calls the "oldest and largest human rights organization in the world," has restyled itself as an ethnic pride organization. After a few imprecations against the "homosexual

trash" in the audience (homophobia being the last refuge of respectable hate-speech), Tom settles down to Oprahesque rhetoric of cultural self-esteem. "We're not here to promote hatred against blacks, or Mexicans or Asians," he intones, "but simply to say 'What's wrong with loving your own people?'"

Switching to a Buchananite register, Tom launches into a diatribe against the NAFTA and GATT treaties for throwing American workers out of their jobs—in terms almost identical to ones the Sparts have been using all afternoon. Soon the transnationals are getting clobbered from both sides of the barricades.

Tom steps down from the microphone, and, after another hour of bagpipe music, the Klan packs up and leaves without incident. The crowd starts to disperse peacefully, but there remains one piece of unfinished business. With astonishing speed, the cops strung out on the sidewalks abruptly coagulate into a solid phalanx and march straight at the remaining knot of demonstrators. The Sparts begin shouting for everyone to get out of the way and avoid provoking the police, but there's no time. The cops plow into the demonstrators, knocking several of them down; the panicky crowd reels. And then, as suddenly as it began, it ends. The crowd backs off warily and begins to stream out of the plaza. The cops just stand there, still the toughest gang in town.

Despite their attempts to be hip, the Klansmen have proven themselves to be out of touch with the modern zeitgeist. While racist undercurrents flow through American politics today, overt appeals to white supremacy are no longer permissible in polite society. The Klan seems unwilling or unable to grasp what the Pat Buchanans of this world have long understood: Racism must be encoded if it is to be treated respectfully by the mainstream media and embraced by the masses.

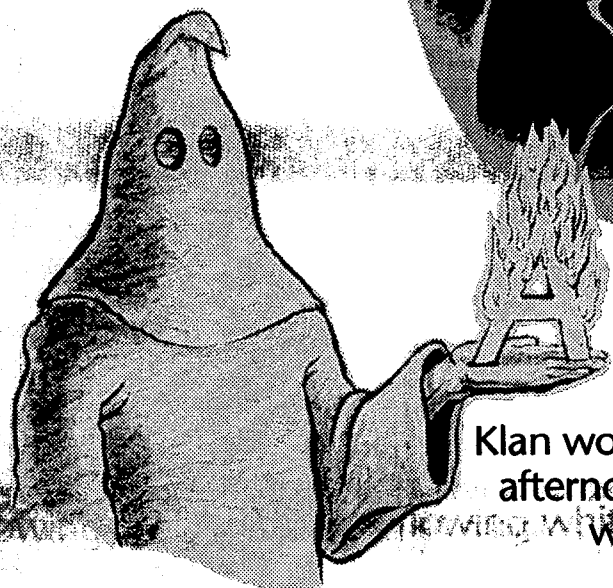
As I watch the Sparts trudge away, I find it hard not to sympathize with their energy and commitment—and equally hard to find a future in it. The Sparts have never attracted a wide base of support; their rigid political perspective has always relegated them to the margins of leftist debate and organizing. A Klan rally is one of the few places left where the Sparts can face their enemies across a barricade, for the world has moved away from them. Trotsky's dream of world revolution has now degenerated into a marketing ploy, alive only in the ersatz global computing environment of an IBM commercial. Corporate power is now downsized and dispersed in a featureless suburbia of office parks and fast-food strips; the great urban factories lie in ruins and with them the old traditions of working-class militancy. Perhaps the only authentic blue-collar icons left are the Sparts' mortal enemies, the cops.

In such a world, the real action is at the Nike store on Michigan Avenue or at the sweatshop in Indonesia where the sneakers are made. A showdown between left and right in Daley Plaza seems sadly beside the point. ◀

I N T H E E N D

By Bill Boisvert

KKK's day out



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s I am leaving the subway one day in downtown Chicago, a leaflet is thrust into my hands warning that the Ku Klux Klan would appear in force at Daley Plaza that very afternoon. The notice conjures up images of men with long flowing white robes and eye holes slashed out of hoods, crosses ablaze, and sinister chanting.

At 2 p.m., Daley Plaza is empty, seemingly sterilized by the broiling sun. By 3 o'clock, it has come to life with a crowd of perhaps 50 anti-Klan demonstrators—complete with placards, slogans and a megaphone—organized by the Spartacist League. The Sparts are a radical splinter group renowned for their belligerence, particularly toward other radical left splinter groups. Against the Klan, though, their habit of showing up uninvited to disrupt other people's events seems finally to have been put to good use.

But the Klan is nowhere to be seen. It turns out their parade permit lasts from three in the afternoon until nine at night, so there may be a long vigil ahead. More anti-Klan grouplets filter in and, as at

any gathering of fringe leftists with time on their hands, fall to haranguing one another. One vocal contingent from the Black Panther Nation presents an ice-people/sun-people mythography that fits today's rally into the 6,000-year history of oppression of the black people by whites, a tradition in which the Jews and the CIA loom large. Their litany is distinctly off-message to the Sparts, who toss some disparaging comments their way. Fervent Trotskyists, the Sparts espouse the big-tent approach of worldwide proletarian insurrection; their sloganeering carefully embraces the many varieties of workers—black, white, Jewish, immigrant, feminist, queer.

Continued on page 39